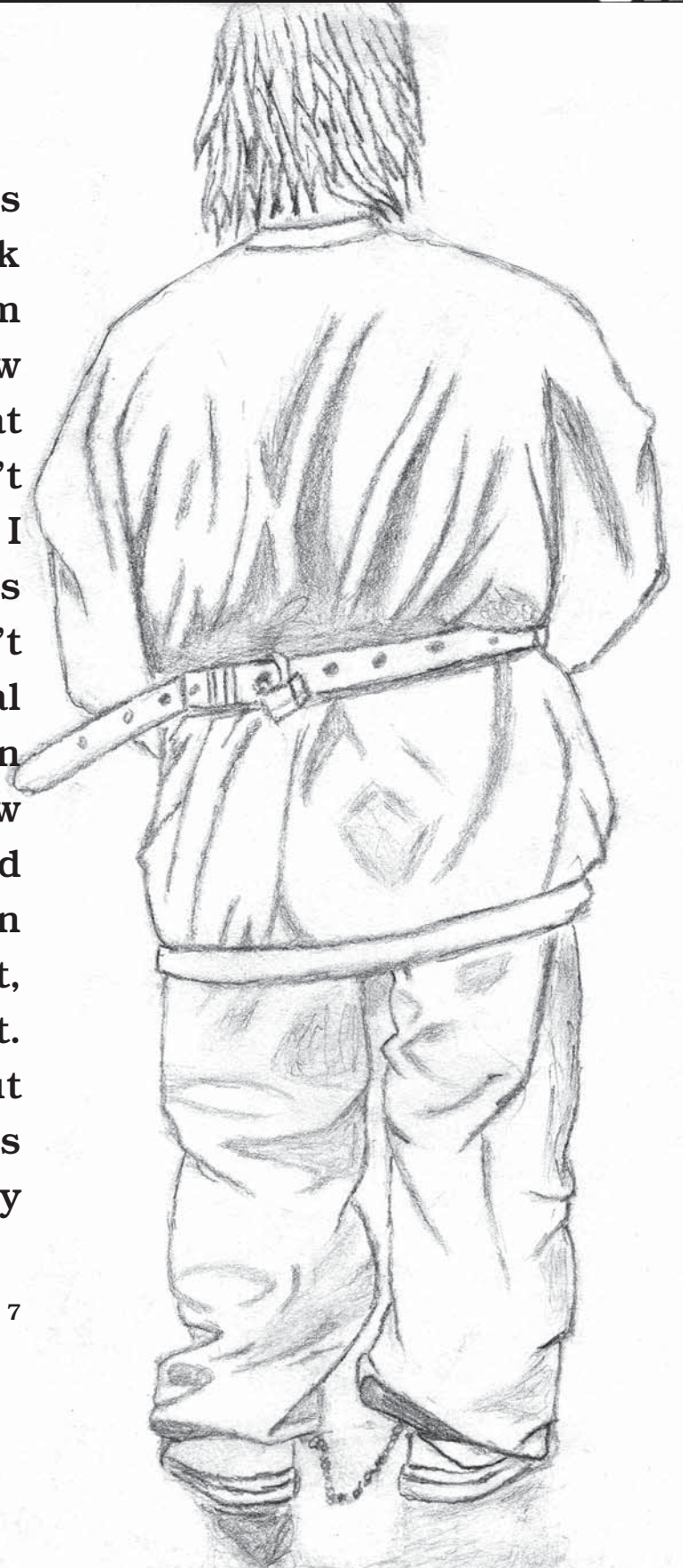


My face showing no emotions hiding them behind a brick wall he can't crack me. I am sure none of these people know anything about me, except what they see on paper. They don't know I write poetry. Every week I get a pencil and spill my emotions out to a sheet of paper. They don't know I got ambitions to be a legal businessman, maybe even own a restaurant. They don't know how I feel towards the victims and their families. How I wake up in the middle of the night in a sweat, having nightmares of my past. They don't know nothing about me, yet they make accusations of the type of person I am, my character.

read the rest of Big Vic's POW on page 7



Welcome to our latest issue of The Beat Within publication! Before we get the ball rolling with this editorial, if we haven't stated this already, we want to inform you that if you really want The Beat Within publication mailed to you, a lot more frequently than you have been receiving this gem, we encourage you to write us! With every letter/contribution we receive, we will send you the latest Beat, especially now where our Beat mailing list is on standstill given the cost to print Beats, to the production end of folding, inserting The Beat in the envelope, and labeling. We are short staffed and given our time with two publications and the numerous workshops, like we said, we encourage you to drop us a line, every week if that's the case, if you really want to keep up with The Beat Within, and in your note to us kindly request the latest Beat! Thanks.

Now, allow us to introduce to you our colleague Siliva, who will give us readers a glimpse inside the new Alameda County Juvenile Hall. With that said, we thought we would include an excerpt from his email that he sent us regarding this latest Beat outreach to the new hall about a month ago. Siliva!

On Saturday, (Beat colleagues) Sheerly, Jennifer, Perry and I had the opportunity to be a part of the "Open To The Public Day, "at the new Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center. We (The Beat Within) were one of many different programs that had an informational booth/table at the lobby of this new facility. As people (from all over the Bay Area) were coming in or out of their tours, they had a chance to stop by our table and hear about our program, as well as pick up a recent copy of The Beat Within that was made available.

A lot of people showed up for this day. The hours the new Juvenile Justice Center was open to the public was from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. No joke, there was literally a line out the door going out on the sidewalk, and extending all the way into the parking lot. Needless to say the turnout was a very good one and the staff did not expect such a turnout. Neither did we, which was evident in the fact that we ran out of Beats. I believe we had an estimate of 50 - 75 various issues, thinking low turn out.

The crowd varied from people who worked for local community programs, to those who wanted to start a community program, to a number of people who work for various parts of the Juvenile Justice System, ranging from probation, counselors, teachers, and volunteers. There were also some members from law enforcement. There were a lot of parents with their kids that were using this opportunity to give their child a first hand look at what juvenile hall looked like from the inside. My take is, this was their way of hoping to steer their kids away from crime, or another form of "Scared Straight," except without those who are incarcerated.

In my honest opinion this outreach was very successful in many ways.

One, we were able to share what The Beat Within is with other community programs and the curious. To our credit, some already heard about The Beat Within, but were now able to hear first hand from us facilitators/Beat people who were present this day. There was many who never heard about our program but were very enthused and supportive of what we do. Just about everyone had questions and we were more than happy to answer those questions.

Two, it was good that we were there because some people from probation, etc, had heard of us, but have yet to meet us or would never meet us because of the time we conduct our workshops - in the evenings. Again were able to answer any questions as well as give them an issue of The Beat Within.

Three, for a lot of the parents that have heard about our program from their kids, this was their chance too to meet us. All of the parents commended us on what we do and inspired us to "keep up the good work." Some parents were amazed at what their child had shared or contributed while in the workshops. Some of the kids introduced us by "this is The Beat, remember I told you about them?" It was very touching, gratifying and moving.

There is a list of numerous names and e-mails that we collected and will be getting back to because we ran out of Beats and didn't have any business cards to pass out. Again, I don't think anyone could have predicted the turnout, or can we even send them Beats, given we can't even give our favorite people Beats at times.

I must say this, I have been a part of a lot of different outreaches into the community over the years repping The Beat Within. Whether it was Youth Empowerment Expo's in San Francisco and Sacramento, to outreaches/presentations at local middle and high schools, to continuation schools, or even a presentation to a Rookie Officers who had just graduated from the Police Academy. This morning was truly unique because there was always someone at our table just about the whole time we were there, asking questions, wanting

to know a little bit more about the program, or to pick up a Beat and hear one of us break down The Beat for them. The poster/bus shelter we used definitely attracted a lot of people.

It was amazing what we saw. I remember in 1999 when Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall was adding on their extension to the hall. I've also witnessed the new Hillcrest aka San Mateo County Juvenile Hall, and I'm currently doing workshops in the new YGC aka Juvenile Justice Center in San Francisco. And now I have seen the new Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center. I think it is amazing yet frightening how much money has been spent within the past eight years in the name of "Juvenile Justice." We're talking about several brand new facilities, and an extension to one. And who's to say what's in the works?

A lot of different people stand out for their own reason from that day. Whether it was the lady who said that her four and six year olds were starting to get into trouble and she hoped this would steer them clear. To the lady who asked how we were funded and when we answered that we were a non-profit, she quickly answered that she wrote grants.

Or to a Deputy Director I was introduced to by a counselor/instructor I've worked with in the past in the SF Juvenile System. I was asked by the lady what my opinion of the hall was. I was hesitant/cautious for I didn't know exactly who this lady was. She heard a little about my past from the counselor, but also heard of what I'm now doing today and she was quite impressed. She heard my hesitation and proceeded to give me her "honest opinion." She said she almost cried when she first saw the new facility because of the "prison look" that it has. But she was hopeful and optimistic that the facility would "rehabilitate" and not "punish." I agreed with her. I later came back with a copy of The Beat and asked if she would like a copy. She seemed very sincere when she said, "Yes, thank you very much."

One thing that we Beat facilitators agreed on, those of us who were fortunate enough to have made it, was that we should do more outreaches. I agree with this whole heartedly because through outreaches we have been able to establish some very valuable relationships. Whether it has been with people who eventually come and volunteer for The Beat, to people asking us to come and do a presentation at their program and/or school. To just sharing The Beat with those who may have yet to hear what The Beat Within actually is. I also believe that it can be a good way for us to include some of the young people who are our interns, so they too can share their story, as well as push themselves in other work related areas.

Over time we will see what comes out of all these new facilities, hopefully a lot more than a new facility that looks like a modern day adult prison, and we're sure that's what the powers that be want too, a safe place that rehabilitates Thanks Siliva!

This week, our topics addressed in the workshops prior to the writings you are about to dive into were, "I Am From" - This topic comes from a teacher friend of ours who asked her students to write poems that begin with those three words: "I am from." This is not an opportunity for you to hold up your turf, your street, or your set, but to think about the ingredients that make you who you are. One girl began her poem: "I am from bobby pins, doo-rags and wide toothed combs." A boy began his piece, "I am from Genesis to Exodus, Leviticus too, church to church, pew to pew." Whether you write about your parents and their beliefs, or your culture and food, or you experience with the law or school or church, everyone should begin with the same three words: "I am from..."

The second topic, "A World Without Borders" - What would a world without borders be like? Would there be different laws? Would there be one leader for all, a president/king or queen? Do you think the world would be as diverse as it is now? Would there be less cultural pride since there would be no countries? Can you imagine your own communities without those borders that keep you out of some places, and keep others out of your places? Let us know what a world without borders would be like.

Lastly, "What's On Your Mind?" -What's the first thing on your mind when you wake up (morning, afternoon, night, anytime)? Is it your family? Your boyfriend/girlfriend? Your case? What? We would like to know at least some of the things that run through your head every time you open your eyes and your brain cells start firing

Knowing all this, now lets praise this issue's POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients! They are Starmesha, Lil' Nene, Young Mone, Lil' Sexy, and Big Vic from the 150 Crew. And from SF/YGC we have Paradise.

All right, this issue goes out to those young men and women who have given up on seeing a better way. We hope they wake up and take charge of their lives very soon. Our suggestion for those interested in correcting their lives, have a game plan, stick around people that care and want to support the new and improved you! It's not going to be easy, but shhh, life isn't easy. Best!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

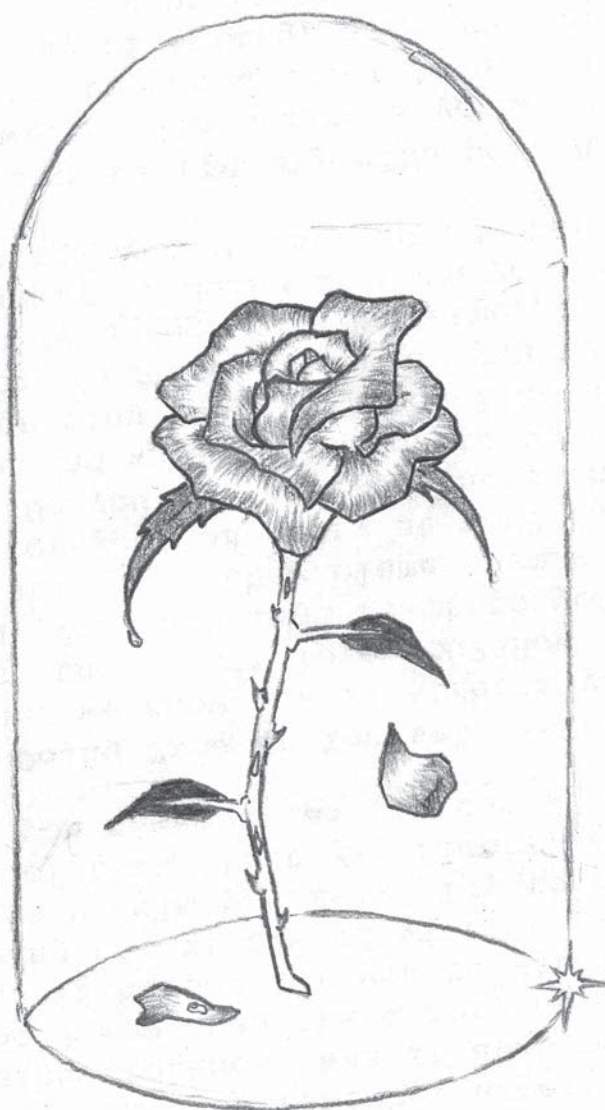
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www.thebeatwithin.org

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From The Beat: We welcome back the mighty Revolutionaries, who ever they are, where ever the yare from, does it really matter? What matters is these young writers step up huge with their contributions that we are so honored to feature. Lat week was our first installment and this week, well, you do the math. Welcome back! So, you say you want a "revolution? Then, lets start this issue off with the hard-hitting in your face, keeping it real writings of The Revolutionaries! Thanks Megan Mercurio for making this all a reality!

The Revolutionaries Are Back! The Intro

We are the students temporarily residing in U6; however we purposefully choose not to incorporate the unit's name, or any other aspect of this institution into the title of this page. For, we refuse to allow our incarceration to bind our minds or silence our voices. In our daily meetings, we use creative writing and performing arts to explore our minds and to critique the world around us. Please listen to our stories without judgment, and allow our voices to overpower the walls the will never truly contain us. The following pieces are account of our first vivid memories.

Special Thanks: Dana Wardven

The Green Parakeets

I am about four years old and my mom has bought two green parakeets and she has them in the box that the pet store has given to her.

My mom asks me, my older sister and my little brother to put our little hands in the box. After that, we all start screaming with excitement because we know that there is something inside the box that is alive.

We keep the parakeets for a few months until they both fly out of an open widow one night.

My parents and my uncle go out looking for them around the neighborhood for a couple of hours. I am really sad they have left.

-Raphael

Disneyland

I wake up this morning and I get dressed and go downstairs. I eat a bowl of cereal and I wait until my uncle calls me and tells me he's outside. I get the call and go outside and see that my uncle has already picked up my cousins and sister.

It is about 6:00am when they pick me up. As we start driving, my uncle asks me if I've eaten because we are going to IHOP to eat. I say yes, but I am still hungry.

We start going down Caesar Chavez and we hop on the freeway. We start going towards Millbrae when I see that there's a car crash in front of us. One of the cars is flipped over and the other car has all of its windows broken and there is a big dent on the side.

We get to IHOP and eat within 45 minutes.

After, we start our journey to Disneyland. I pass out at around 9:00pm. I wake up at around 10:00am the next day in a hotel parking lot. I see my uncle and aunt walking out with the hotel keys. They open the door and me all my cousins and sister to wake up. We all get our luggage and go inside. We walk two blocks until we hit Disneyland. It is so beautiful; there are all the Disney characters walking around. We start taking pictures with all the characters.

-Yung Jokes

The Rainy Wet Park

I am cold and wet, it is raining. I can see many trees and people playing soccer. I walk closer into the park and I feel scared because the trees look scary, like malevolent trees looking at me with branches that look like hands trying to reach out and grab me. So I try not to look at the trees. I am with my dad and we come to the park so my dad can play soccer because he is on the team. The park is really big and it has at least four soccer fields. When I am walking in the park I can feel my shoes getting wet and muddy. Every step I take, I feel like I have rubber boots stepping in melting ice. By the time I get to the other side of the park, my clothes are so wet that it looks like I had just jumped in a pool. I see one of my friends and we start playing soccer.

-Kwes

In The Kitchen With Mother

I'm watching my mother in the kitchen and she keeps moving back and forth. She's fixing up dinner; tostadas are what she's making. She looks hot; she has sweat dripping from her forehead. She turns the fan on and opens the back door to let some fresh air in. I'm only eight years old sitting on the living room floor, I tried helping, but she refused my help.

-Alejandro

On My Bike

I am about five years old. I am just waking up and getting out of bed. This day I just start living life. I try to ride a bicycle and fall many times and hurt myself. But after a few tryouts, I am riding under the sun.

-Jungle

It's Time To Go Home

I am playing with my two cousins, Derral and Devante, having the best of times when all of a sudden my aunt says, "It is time to go home." I am upset about this because my cousins live so far away and I barely ever get to see them.

I have an idea: I'll go with them! I run upstairs to the living room and say, "Mom, can I spend the night at Auntie Reese's house? Please Mom, come on, please?" My cousins are standing next to me pleading with their mom.

My aunt doesn't mind but my mother declines my pleas, using a dumb excuse: "It's a school night and you're not missing school." So I go off to my room feeling mad. What am I going to do? My brothers are not home, my sisters are just playing with their dolls, and I am definitely not going to play with them. I know! I will sneak to my aunt's house by getting in the car without her or my mother knowing.

So I get in my aunt's car and hide in the back seat while my aunt and cousins say their goodbyes. My aunt and cousins get in the car and begin their drive home. I tap my cousin, scaring him and saying, "Shhh, don't tell your mom." My cousin immediately looks to his mom and says, "Mom, Deandre is in here." My aunt looks back and begins laughing hysterically while pulling into a Shell gas station.

I think, "Dang, what the heck is wrong with my cousin?" My aunt gets out and walks to the back of the minivan, opens the back door and lifts the jacket I was hiding under from over me. I look up, smiling from ear to ear and say, "Hi Auntie Reese."

She responds, "Boy what you doing? You know Dana (my mom) is going to take your hide for this. Get in the car with your cousins. You know I have to call your mom and tell her."

I plead, "No, you don't. You can just keep me forever." My cousins simultaneously scream, "Yeah!"

My aunt tells me she can't do that because my mom would miss me. She said that she would just call her when we get home because she didn't feel like going back and forth! We get to my aunt's house and my aunt calls my mom and she's telling her what happened, but my mom doesn't even seem mad. She's actually laughing about it.

I think, "I guess I won't be getting in trouble. Yes!!!" I wake up in the morning and play with my cousins for a while before my aunt takes me home. I'm thinking, "It's all good. My mom was laughing." I walk in the house and my mom is sitting on the couch belt in hand. And you know what happened next.

-Paradise

Facing My Fears

It is me, my aunts and six or seven of my cousins that are going to Disneyland for the summertime. I think I am six or seven at the time. We're staying at the hotel for three or four days.

By the second day we're there, we are all over Disneyland, riding on a lot of rides, winning prizes, eating and having a lot of fun, until I run into one of the Disney characters. I've never wanted to see them up close in person, I would rather see them on TV. I knew that one day I would have to stand up and face my fears. Everybody that I am staying with at the hotel makes fun of me.

When we get back to the hotel they are still making fun of me so I get mad and I attack one of my cousins and I get in trouble for doing that. So now that I'm older, I've started facing my fears.

-Fear No More

Ouch

I am six or seven years old and I am in my mom's living room, sitting on the couch. The room is small with one love seat. It is old black leather and it is starting to crack. We also have a 19 inch TV. We are watching Rugrats when my uncle Kenny comes in. He starts to play fight with me and I hit him in the nuts on accident and he doubles over.

-Marky D

The Loss Of My Brother

I wake up and go outside and as I'm walking to the store I see one of my brother's friends drive by. He stops and says, "Your brother wants me to drop you off at his house in about 30 minutes."

So I say, "Ok, I'm just going to ride with you."

After that, we go to get something to eat and right before we are getting ready to go to my brother's house, I have to go back to my house to get my cell phone.

As I get out of the car, one of my friends says, "You need to go see what's going on with your mom because something just happened to your brother."

So as I walk to my door, a lot of things are going through my mind. As I open the door, I see my mom standing up crying. I ask what's wrong and she says, "Your brother just died."

So as soon as I hear that, I just go crazy because that was so unexpected. I just run out of the house and start crying, while my right hand man was by my side through the whole thing, trying to calm me down.

When my mom told me my brother was gone, I do not believe it, so I go down to his house just to see for myself. When I get down there, nobody is there. I leave, and go back home to be with my family.

-Bishop

A Quiet Christmas

Today's Christmas and my family and I have nothing planned. My sister's in the kitchen getting some eggnog. My mom's in her room still sleeping and my brother just left to his car to get a movie he bought. I'm just in the living room watching "The Waterboy", my house has never been this quiet.

-Alejandro

Do You Know The Way?

I am riding a bike with my friend Sean. We are going to Golden Gate Park and his sister is also with us. We usually go with his mom and dad but this was the first time we went without them. So they really didn't remember the route we take, but I do. It was hard for them to believe.

-Aron

I'm From

I am from water to lakes, from birds to snakes,
from place to place. I am me,
from tall tree to a stinging bee.
I am attitude, so just let me be,
I am a silent girl, that loses the world.
I am from a family of girls from an uptown world,
I am from punk rock to hip hop to Levis jeans.
I am the girl that never gets hyphy.
I am me so just let me be,
'cause this world is not for me,
I am different I am a star. You'll see.

-Starmesha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you're a star. We know by your words and your thoughts. We know by the way you write, the way you talk. We know you have huge potential and we look forward to the day you come into yourself. By the way, what in the world are you doing in jail?



Bring Back

I am from big houses to little apartments,
loud music with lots of heart,
arguments that end in deaths.
I am from perms and flat irons,
shower two times a day or else you wouldn't be right.
I am from long days sitting with yo peeps,
thinkin' what the next day will bring.
I am from not talk just action, prove you can, there will
be no reaction.
I am from tight, tight, tight jeans, white beader shirts
with some Nikes.
I am from watering the grass in the morning mist
I am from seeing what shouldn't be seen with such
young eyes.
I am from Oakland California.

-Lil' Nene, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautiful and evocative piece. We feel we know where you're from and can picture it. If you were to write it again, but this time - where you wish you were from - what would be different and what would be the same?



Slave Street

I am from the street. A street.
A street named after a dead president.
A president that at one time was a slave owner.
A slave owner who looked at my people as dirt, garbage,
worthless, Nothing more than property to be sold from
white man to white man.
A dead president that many people have killed over,
hurt people over and most importantly hurt themselves
over.
A street, a block, a 'hood that nobody owns and will never
own because they're not doing nothing with themselves
To get in the position to own a block or anything for that
matter.
I don't mean to be hypocritical because I claim this street
that I am from But I am looking for a way out because it's
were I come from
But it's not where I want to be.

-Paradise U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We turned the wonderful piece into a poem because it read like a poem to us. We love how you managed to write about your street without actually naming it. And we love that you have come to see that the street is nothing more than a street. You may claim it, but it doesn't claim you. We think it's time for your actions to conform to what you want in your life, for your behavior to be as impressive as your brain! You can do it, Paradise. Will you do it? We hope so!

I Am From...

I am from a place nearest to hell
I am from a place where money runs everything
I am from a place where you're judged
By the color of your skin
I am from a place where people kill for drugs
I am from a place where sex makes you a man
I am from a place where you have to learn the hard way
I am from a place called "earth"
And when I say nearest to hell,
I mean what would you call it?

-Young Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For the most part, it sounds like we're all from the same place and we all may want the same things. Do you think where you're from, matters more than what you want? It's good to be in touch with one's reality, but wouldn't it be more productive to focus in and work towards what you want out of life? Honestly, we wouldn't know "what to call it?" We try not to continue contributing to the wrong and build from that. Hopefully our actions are seen, and rub off on others!

My Life Story

I've really been through a lot of stuff in my life: I have gotten raped by mom's ex-boyfriend; also he was putting his hands on me and my sister and my brother. So that is why I am in the situation I am in now, because of what has happened to me and to my family. This is really the reason why I want to change my life around. My being the one who stayed with my mom, is the reason why I look at things the way I do.

The other reason why I need to change myself is because I know by me doing all these wrong things, it's going to get me locked up in CYA doing big time. So I really need to look at my behavior, 'cause my acting a fool in juvenile hall can get the judge and my placement people to think like, "Oh, we don't want her, because of the way she behaves." And they will say, "We don't want her." So that will have me be waiting longer in here just to find a placement.

I have had my brother and sister really get badly beaten up by my mom's ex-boyfriend. And when I would see him hitting on my brother like that, my mom and I would go get two bats and beat that ninja's ass like he aint never got his ass beat before! Old sorry-ass ninja! So then he would go to my sister, and me and my mom and brother would be jumping that ninja! Because my mother wouldn't let that go down, 'cause that was second child she had — and my mom really will love her kids until the day she dies! But then he would start beating up my mom — and that was not to be allowed! So the minute he did that, we'd all get something in our hands and just start beating that disrespectful ninja's ass! We really took my mom's well-being seriously, because she is the one who gave us birth; and I'll be damned if I'll let a mean-ass ninja mess up my mom's life. He just proved he was a stupid-ass ninja that doesn't mean anything to me or my family, not if he hurts our mom.

So that is why I am writing this about my life, because there have been some times when I would have to go get help from my neighbor's house and ask them to come help us. So they would come and take us to church with them! And I really thank God for having some good neighbors around, because without them we would be dead right now! And that is why I pray every day and night, because of what all happened in my life.

Then me, my brother and sister were going to school, and one day that man who used to be my mom's boyfriend came to our school and started beating us, in front of our friends! So then my friends called my mom at her job and said, "That bitch-ass ninja at the school beating on your kids!" And my mom was at our school so quick and so fast! And then the ninja began putting his hands on my mom! So all her kids and our friends were jumping his dirty ass, and someone called the police. So we went to our home, and that punk went to his mother's house.

Then one morning we all woke up, and we was cleaning up the house because my social worker was coming to the house to give my mom some money for us to get our school clothes and our allowance and stuff. Then we saw that dirty-ass ninja walking up the hill with his bike — and when he came into the house, he began to slap on my sister again! But by now I had this crowbar waiting for him to put his hands on her again. So I took that bar and whacked him with it! And he was bleeding all over the house, and I said to him, "You better quit while you're ahead and get out this house!"

But he didn't listen. So we just went to our room and

starting cleaning up there. But then he came messing with me! And I said, "Ninja, if you don't get the freak away from me, I will kill you!" That's when he grabbed my backpack with the wheels on it and hit me with it! When he did that, he broke my wrist!

My mom said to me, "Go get in the tub."

I said, "Okay," and got in. And after went in the bathroom and got in the tub, I called for my mom to come into the bathroom with me so I could show her that my wrist was broken.

Then my mom said, "Y'all go to Albertson's for me." And we all did. I was riding with my brother on his bike and my sister was riding by herself. Then as we were coming out of Albertson's, the medical people said that my wrist looked like it was broken and they put me in the back of the medical car and took me to the hospital. When my brother and sister saw me being taken away in the ambulance, they ran home to my mom crying and saying, "She at the hospital!" And, "We need to go see little sister!"

So then when they got there, my mom really got very mad because we got taken from her, all because of that damn ex-boyfriend of hers that wanted to do too much — he got her kids taken from her! Then once they put me in a group home, I stayed until one day I got a call, and they said, "Your mother is in the hospital." I just left my group home and never went back! This is why I love my life now, because I don't have to deal with these problems anymore. But anyway, that is when I started to have a good relationship with my family.

But then after being with my baby'daddy and his cousin, when we was having fun, me and him left to go get a room in West Oakland because he didn't even want to try to go in the house because it was like going on midnight. So then, the next morning, we woke up and got dressed and went to go get my cousin from her house. And we all went back to East Oakland. That was fun, but then two weeks later, I found out from his cousin that my baby'daddy in jail! And that was when because I had popped a pill, I went bad on everybody — and I ended up getting in some trouble because he was in jail.

But the point of the story is really that I had been drinking some 1800 with my baby'daddy cousin, and when we was done with that, I was like, "I just don't give a damn, because that was my baby's father!" But now I know where he's at and when he's getting free; so I have nothing to worry about, since I know he is safe and will be home a day before his birthday. If it has a happy ending, the trouble doesn't matter to me at all. So I thank God that he didn't get killed or something.

And all I have to say in conclusion is that when I leave here, he and I are going to gain our relationship back, the way it was before he went to jail.

-Lil' Sexy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's quite a story, girl. You have had by a rough time. That man did not belong with your family. His behavior is unforgivable. Perhaps he taught you the need for violence, but in a long run, a violent reaction on your part will only hurt you. What's more, you need to stay away from alcohol and pills. Having in your little family together again, would be wonderful, but not the way it was — you both need to do better. You have been damaged. To heal will take time, but you need to take that time to heal. Apparently your mother did not know how to say no to her boyfriend and make it stick. Learning when to say no and how to shut the door on trouble, before it comes to violence or certainly repeated violence, is a lesson that will bring you and your baby blessings. You have had more than your share of pain and trauma. Simplify your life, quit the drama before it starts — and heal your heart! Thanks for sharing this story of your difficult to life.

when I leave here, he and I are going to gain our relationship back,
the way it was before he went to jail

Strangers Judging Me: My Sentencing

Here I am once again, sitting in this chair, next to a stranger, better known as my attorney, and staring at me with his big blue eyes, another stranger, better known as the judge. I rarely see both of these two men, maybe once every month when I come to court. These two men, and also the D-A, which is just as much a stranger as the other two, hold my life in their palms.

I just hope my attorney has good grip and doesn't get sweaty. I haven't even mentioned my P-O which I have only seen a total of three times during my year long stay in Juvenile Hall.

These four individuals control my destiny, or future should I say. Three are against me and one is one my side, or so he says. None of these individuals have gotten to speak with me for more than one hour, and two, the D-A and judge, haven't had a real conversation with me yet. They only heard me say two words "Yes sir," when I was admitting to the allegations. But yet, these people have labeled me many things, some true, others not.

My PO has made a recommendation, based on the two interviews she has had with me. None of these people have seen the change that has happened. I came in as an immature boy, and I'm leaving as sophisticated young man. But they don't see it, all they see is a kid who tried, or attempted, to murder three individuals. They see a ruthless, no empathy type person. Lie.

I sit back looking in the eyes of this man. I know he has a tremendous amount of power. He controls life's changes, destinies, gives chances, and locks people away. I am one of those people, waiting to get my sentence from a complete stranger.

He looks over the brim of his glasses, and stares at me with his big blue eyes. I guess he's trying to feel me out, and I wonder what he is seeing in me. His face is emotionless, and I try to equal mine to his. He might be looking inside of me to see if I got a heart, a soul.

I don't think my life should be based on a stare down. I hold my self back, but I'm on the brink of cracking a huge smile. I really want to say, "What you looking at? What the hell you looking at? You can't hurt me! Noting can, as long as I got the Lord by my side. You're not a real judge, He is, so your words are meaningless!" But I know nothing positive could come out of this episode so I respectfully stare back.

My face showing no emotions hiding them behind a brick wall he can't crack me. I am sure none of these people know anything about me, except what they see on paper. They don't know I write poetry. Every week I get a pencil and spill my emotions out to a sheet of paper. They don't know I got ambitions to be a legal businessman, maybe even own a restaurant. They don't know how I feel towards the victims

and their families. How I wake up in the middle of the night in a sweat, having nightmares of my past. They don't know nothing about me, yet they make accusations of the type of person I am, my character.

And so he looks away, back down to his papers if anything. I have gotten a victory here today. I won the stare down with the judge, so I am not leaving this courtroom a complete loser.

As he begins to speak I don't hear a thing. All it is, is complete silence, his mouth is moving, but I don't here words nothing but silence. Slowly I see his face begin to blur, the he is just a pale creature staring at me. Suddenly, his face re-appears, but with different features, it is of the victims of my crime staring dead at me.

I hear my name being called, so I open my eyes to see the sheriff standing over me. God, it was all a dream but it all felt so real. I push all my hair back, straighten my clothes out, and begin the walk that I been waiting for, for a year.

Here I am, about to be sentenced by a complete stranger. I walk into the courtroom with my head up high I look at my parents and my two brothers. This is what I should have been doing, being with my family not fighting for a fake family.

My heart beats a mile a minute. I think the judge can see it beating too, so I close my eyes and try a quick meditation too slow my heart pace down. This is it, my life is in this man's hand. I open my eyes and the stare down begins, and like my dream I win it.

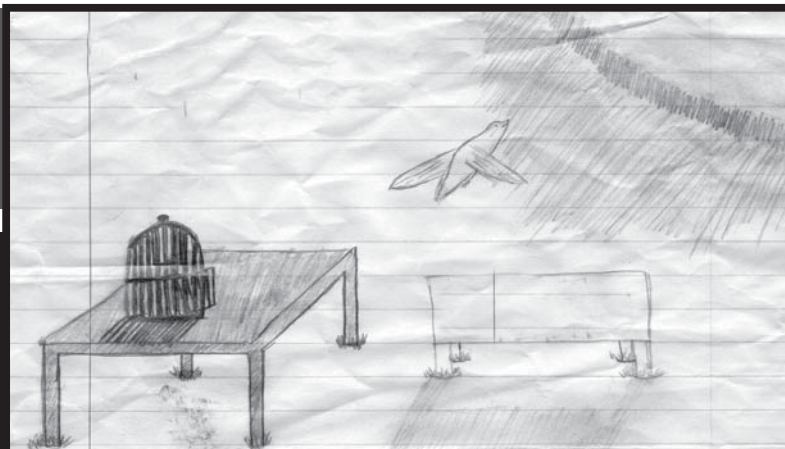
He is about to speak, but my lawyer interrupts him. He explains to the judge that I am nearly about to graduate high school and if we could postpone the sentencing 'till a later day. I am shocked, because we didn't discuss none of this. The judge agrees and sets my court day back 'till March 27th.

I can't do nothing but laugh and walk out of the courtroom. Another month to wait 'till my dooms day. My next court might be my last to see the free world because once we move to the new Juvenile hall in April, all courts will be situated in the facility.

On my return drive back to juvenile, I stare at the cars passing by, then they sky, and I think away, wondering what will happen next? I won't know 'till March 27th, hopefully my last court date. But I thought the same about today, so who knows. Time is the real challenge.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent piece Vic! Well, this Beat comes out on the date you have court, 3/27/07. By the time you see this piece we hope for your sake you have been sentenced and you are satisfied with the outcome. You have come such a long way with your writing and your own maturity as a person. We appreciate your skills and your ability to take us inside your head, sharing your thoughts, fears as you await your fate. We look forward to reading your thoughts for years to come Vic. Don't stop sharing your gifts, you are doing a tremendous job working on yourself and touching the many readers each week as a teacher!



My heart beats a mile a minute. I think the judge can see it beating too, so I close my eyes and try a quick meditation too slow my heart pace down. This is it, my life is in this man's hand.

My Uncompleted Puzzle Is My Dad

When I think of a uncompleted puzzle, I really don't know what that means. But then I realized that I'm not complete.

When my dad left me, I was jus a lil' bee, too lil' to realize he wasn't there for me. He left me and my sister, 'cause he messed up wit' the law, too. So today and tomorrow, my life will be incomplete.

Until we meet again, Beat!

-Queen Bee, Marin

From The Beat: Your father being "away" can create a huge hole in your mom's, sister's and your lives. And we are sorry for that. Don't let his mistake affect your life. You were born alone, with nothing in your hands. What we mean by this is that you can succeed even if he is or isn't with you. We bet that you have a mother or grandmother who has been more than a mother and a father. Right? Is there anything in this world that can complete you? Who?



Always Taken

I'm from Petaluma
Born in Guerneville
Taken to Petaluma
Age two, taken from my mom
To my dad's for life
Always taken

Now I'm taken from society
To these walls
That doesn't change
Where I'm from, though

I am a new man
Ready to take on anything
That this world can throw at me!
I've turned away from the drugs and violence
To a new outlook on things
'Cause I am what I say I am
Not what you say I am

-Jamey, Marin

From The Beat: Very nice piece! It must have been really hard to be yanked away from your mom, especially when you were so young, and eventually from your dad's and now from society. It must seem like you've never had much control over where you were, what was home, over any of your life. When you're free again, will you be able to determine your future? If so, where will you live? Will you go back to school? What has taught you that drugs and violence aren't helping you? What is your new outlook? Let us know!

My Best Friend

There were times when we drank liquor
But most of the time it made us much sicker

He helped when I was self mutilating
He made me happy when life was frustrating
He understood when I felt misunderstood
I tried to help him stay out the 'hood.

He helped me stay in school

Even though I was acting a fool

He wrote me letters while I was in the hall
He would talk to me when I gave him a collect call

He was there when I made my first gravity bong

He even made me two very sweet rap song

He wrote me poems on how he feels

We always competed on who could eat bigger meals

I would always wake him up when I got out of school

I'd slap him in the face and say, "Wake up fool!"

There's been times when we fight and bicker.

But it was mostly when we drank liquor

We've often wanted to be more than friends

But we know if that happened our friendship would end

I try to comfort him about his mother's death

I'm always there for him even when he loses his breath

I know it was meant to be...

That's why my best friend he will always be...

And this know for a fact..

That my best friend's name

Is Zach...

You might wonder who's my best friend

He's been my friend and will be till the very end

He makes me laugh, he makes me sad

He's truly the bestest friend I've ever had

I can't express how much he means to me

Buy my best friend he'll always be

We've shared our hopes and dreams

No matter how far out they seem

He understands me even when I don't say a thing

He told me not to get treated like shhh, but like a queen

He tells me I'm beautiful inside and out

Even though he knows what I'm all about

It's true sometimes we cause nothing but trouble

But he will still be there even when it all burns down to rubble

He's helped me with my homework, and I've helped him

I can tell him my darkest sin

Sometimes I laugh when he writes a dumb rap

And sometimes we laugh about "Bustin'Caps."

I've expressed to him why I'm depressed.

He makes it seem okay when my life is a mess.

He saved me at times when I make myself bleed

He taught me what kind of life I could lead

And yeah, we did a lot of drugs

But we've also shared a lot of hugs

There have been times when we cry

And there have been times we both want to die

There have been times we act stupid

Especially when I get hit by cupid.

-Sick-An-Twiztid, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a different kind of love poem, the kind that talks about the deep emotional bond that can develop between two people, whether they're lovers or not. The drugs that you did brought you here (and took you away from his comfort), but we hope you take the alcohol use very seriously. If you read what you've written, you can see how alcohol has hurt you. Liquor not only made you "sicker," it also made you bicker! If we had the kind of loving support you write about here, we'd do whatever it takes to get back into the zone.

I can't express how much he means to me
Buy my best friend he'll always be

What's On My Mind Every Day

My name is Stephanie. I'm 14 years old. I'm currently in rehab. Every day, all day, from the moment I wake up till the time I go to bed, my mom is on my mind. I absolutely love my mom with all my heart. My whole life it's been me and her, so without seeing or talking to her, it has been hard.

Another thing that's on my mind all day, every day, is my boyfriend. He has always been supportive of me getting clean. He has been three months clean himself.

The biggest thing that always is on my mind is the day I get out of this crazy place. I'm so ready to get out, get back to school, get a job, live life clean and sober for the rest of my life. I want to be back with my family and other special people in my life, sleep in my own bed, see my animals, stuff like that.

Well thanks for taking time to read this.

-Stephanie, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: It does sound like you're ready to rejoin your family and the world, and to respect your body and your mind by staying sober. What do you think the hardest part of that success story is going to be? What kind of animals do you like?

Brother On My Mind

What's on my mind is my brother and how much I miss him. He's locked up; I'm locked up. What else is on my mind is time. My mother a strong woman who is still there for me. She on her own. Her two kids are down and nobody there to talk to her, support her. But something about her is still going on see, handling her business, going to San Bruno to see my brother, and her seeing me here, supporting me, talking to me, still there for me on my ups and downs.

What else is on my mind is school, how I'm not that far from graduating. I still got the job. Another thing that is on my mind is the block, the homies. Nobody hasn't wrote me, so they ain't my ninjas. They sure don't give a damn about me, how I'm in here one more time. People hatin' and projecting and shhh, but forget that. I'm going to do me 'cause they sure ain't gonna put money in my pockets or my education. Only certain homies I'm coo' with, but they doing their shhhh.

Another thing is my case and my grandma, and God, and how I still wanna live and change my life, and take care of me and moms and forget everybody else. I got big and better things. I'm tired of doing this. I'm 17 and it's time to change. I want a family, a job, my mother and my brother back. This lifestyle I'm repeating is old.

Another thing on my mind is me when am I going to stop repeating my life. How can I think positive? I can't cry. I can't hate nobody. I feel crazy. I'm tired of being around lil'-ass kids. I'm tired of this world and the life I'm living. The sadness, the loneliness, this girl that stays strong and shows no pain. I can't feel shhh no more. I can't cry. All I can do is stand on my two feet, chin up high, and stay doing me, and keeping my business going. But all the stuff is happening. I can't feel the pain. Which pain? I really don't know. I'm numb. I've been through a lot and I don't know how to express it.

-Lucero U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't think you have much trouble expressing how you feel. But we also think that what you are feeling mostly is confusion. You don't want to keep coming back here, but you're not sure how to move beyond here. We also don't think you're numb, even if you can't cry. Your words reveal deep feelings, and maybe you find it difficult to cry because you're afraid if you start crying, you won't be able to stop. Anyway, it's obvious you've figured some important things out about who is truly on your side and who only claims to have your back. We hope you remember that family is everything, so that you won't be tempted to do the things that take you from them.

Where The Hell Am I?

When I wake up and open my eyes, the first thing that comes to my head is, where the hell am I? I hear the staff say I got 15 minutes 'till breakfast. I see that lonely toilet in the corner of the room. I think about how I got in such a place like this.

When I was a kid, I always said I would go to college and buy a huge house. That I'd have a nice car and a wife. But now I'm in here. And how the hell will that ever happen now that I am in here?

I think about my parents and what I have put them through. I remember seeing my mom cry in the courtroom when they took me away.

I also think about what will happen when I get out. I want to do the program, but I said that before, and now I'm back in here.

With all that on my mind, how the hell do they expect me to be ready for breakfast in 15 minutes? Peace out.

-Lion Fishy U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right, those things will never happen if you're in there. They can, however, happen if you're free, doing what you need in order to obtain those things. Don't be too hard on yourself. We've all made mistakes. But can you examine the series of things that led you back here after promising yourself that you'd never come back? Can you look back, step by step, and see where you should have made different choices? What would help you the most to keep your promise to yourself? The reason you're back is because you didn't "do" what you said you'd "do." So, what will it take this time?

I remember seeing my mom cry in the courtroom when they took me away.

Stressin'

incarceration with no hesitation
the judge ordered me detained with no consideration
it's crazy how easy i got in this situation
i made positive changes, and i also made mistakes
to learn remorse from this system, i don't know what it takes

they told me once, and again and again
but i didn't listen to my family, 'cause i was too into my friends

hocus-pocus, what disappeared was my focus
all because a so-called potna said "smoke this"
i gave up my freedom 'cause i was blinded by fools
but in the beginning, succeeding was my number one rule
haters wanted me to lose from the start to the finish
but i'm sitting here stronger than popeye on spinach
i ain't giving up, even though i'm tied down
sometimes you see me smile, but you know i wanna frown
i was given plenty of chances and i kissed them goodbye
so i sit day by day and ask myself why
why did i do it, why didn't I think
but it happened so fast, as quick as a blink
one day i'll look back and see this as a lesson
but for now i sit here, doing nothing but stressing

-Young J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In a way it's sweet to welcome your poetic prowess back to the pages of The Beat, but then again it's tragic to see you falling again for the same smoky magic you hoped to find in a pipe or sparking up a blunt in the night of your misguided desire — or was at this there in the air? Why'd you throw away your freedom without a care? It's not mind over matter. You've got to re-educate your heart to want something better! Don't let the stress get the best of you even if your heart feels shattered. Learn your lesson, seize your blessing and rise — exercise your heart and start to realize your better part!

No Borders

A world without borders would be so beautiful. Too bad no one will know how that feels, especially me. My whole life I've had borders all around me. When I walk outside I can't even go to a neighbor house without lots of alarms going off.

-Lil' Nene, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What would it take for you to feel free? Would it take you leaving Oakland and discovering another city? Would it take you leaving California and discovering another state? Would it take leaving the United States and discovering another country? Or would it take getting an education and discovering different ways of thinking and seeing the world? Would it take getting involved in positive projects in your community to see the people from a different perspective? What would it take for you to start breaking down those borders blocking you in?

I Got This Bad Feeling I Go' Get Shot

What it do, Beat? This Young Jeff up here, doin' my, doin' my, doin' my thang, feel me? Thugging wit' me, myself, and I. But what's up, Beat? Man, thank y'all for coming up here every Friday and giving us a chance to write whatever is on our minds, so feel me? Thank y'all but, yeah, man, let me get back on tha topic.

Young Jeff up outta here in a few, back to the streets, doin' my thang, seein' what's out there for a young thang. For some reason I got this bad feeling that I'm go' get shot or something, but if I do, it's on me, 'cause I know what I got into before I got in it, so if anything happen, it's my fault. So if something happening to me, I don't want nobody to feel sorry for me, but holla back, Beat.

-Young Jeff LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is the most raw and honest piece you've ever written, Young Jeff. Why don't you take your bad feelings seriously and really think about what you can do to alter your life radically when you're free again. When you think about going back to the streets, would it be out of habit, passion, or because you truly think the world outside the streets doesn't offer you anything valuable enough for you to try it, to keep yourself alive? Read what you've just written! Please do whatever you need to do to keep your precious life.



if something happening to
me, I don't want nobody to
feel sorry for me

I Love You, Dad!

I wish I never came to this place. I'm not even supposed to be here. I'm innocent. I'm just waiting to be proven innocent.

Well, today is a special day to me because it would be my dad's 50th birthday and I'm so depressed that I'm not out being able to go see him at the cemetery and take him flowers.

He passed away a week after my 3rd birthday, but when I get out, I'm gonna go visit him. I pray to him everyday that he keeps me strong and to get through this program no matter how hard it is for me.

God bless everybody and get through your program and love and honor your parents with all your heart, and if you don't have a mother or father, know that they're in heaven and they want to see you succeed in your life.

I love you, Dad! Rest In Peace Jose Felix Estrada Sr. Love, your son,

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We regret to hear about your loss. In life, we all have to go sooner or later, but for those who are still alive, we wish that person would have left later rather than sooner. Even though you were very young, do you have any memories of spending some time with your father? If you do, cherish them. We know your father was a good man because you're writing about him. It is so easy to make a child. However, it takes a man to raise one. What do you think your father would say about you being locked up? In his name turn your bad situation around!

The Visit

It's not your fault.

I'm only human, I have made some mistakes

So many bad decisions

And this is only a three hour visit

I wait all week to see you,

I think about you day and night and then

here I see you and we have a fight.

This is so depressing, and it

Ain't right

I 'm sure I haven't made things easy, doing the things I do,

Though I'm constantly trying to get by

And I'll keep on trying till the day I die

This has been my life for so long

Where no matter what good I wish I still do wrong

So please let me express how deep my love is for you and
your life ahead

I never ever want you to wish you was dead.

-I love you mom.

Your son,

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a powerful poem, both because of its strong emotions and the way you set it down. This piece just about breaks the heart, just like that old line about how we always hurt the ones we love. It's also part of the terrible stress of lockdown, your whole relationship with the people you care about has to be sandwiched into these little visits in a strange room. We're sorry you and your mother had a fight. Have you spoken since and made up? When you say "No matter what good I wish, I still do wrong," it makes us wonder - do you think this could change? What gets in your way? Would you would write a poem about this - where is does the wrong come in to destroy the wish?

Thizz Ain't What It Is

Thizz makes you feel like you are on top of the world. Thizz makes you do stuff you don't really do like hit a house or even try to kill somebody. But thizz put me away for a long time.

I didn't mean to thizz that hard to do what I did. Now I'm sittin' in this room, knowin' what I did was wrong. But I ask God to forgive me. I did people wrong, I even did my mom wrong on Thizz. Thizzin' got me what I wanted at the wrong way.

I was a Thizz kid, it was at the wrong way. I was a Thizz kid, it was like I couldn't stop. Every time I got money I would spend it all on thizz and weed and drank. I had over thirty dranks a week on thizz.

Thizz have you hit a house and spend all ya money on it. But sometimes you thizz and get lucky on something. What I'm tryin' to say is that when you thizz don't do that much like I did. Since I was thirteen I popped like over 475 pills and now I'm sixteen years old. Thizz is not what it is for me. Don't Thizz that much and be safe thizzin'. Gone.

-Lil' Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ecstasy is a drug that really messes people up. It's advertised as something that will make you happy, make you dance, but as you know, the MDMA is cut with so much speed that really all it does is stress you out and make you do stupid harmful things that are out of character. Plus, taking more than one pill, mixing it with other drugs, these are all things that can destroy a life. We're sorry you had to learn this lesson in such a painful way - but it's good to hear you recognize that you are a much better person than the person you became on this poison. As for Thizzin' safely: There no such thing as safe Thizz, just like there's no such thing as "safe" Russian roulette. Eventually - there's a bullet in the chamber. Peace.

What I Know

This week, I found that I got accepted to a Group Home. I'm thinking that it's a chance to do right and to fix my life. All these people that go to Group Homes and run away and get back in here, the funny part is that they complain that they got locked up again? And they get mad when the staff clown them for running like dummies? So the way I'm looking at it is that I'm going to look at other people's mistakes and do my program, get a GED, and move on with my life after my little mistake that I made and move on.

Hopefully, this is my last time writing to the Beat, but I don't think, so till next time Beat.

-Ali, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you do what you said you were going to do in your piece! Because if you don't understand why fools get madder when they clowned on for finding themselves behind bars again by the counselors, you'll find out first-hand because we will be the first people to clown on you for being behind bars again if it happens to you!

Hard Life

Hey Beat it's the Baby the Fly Kid, coming from the Hall and it's like this:

I been locked up for six months, and I been thinking about life. and life on the street is hard to live and we be having staff trying to talk to us about our life on the street, but they ain't in our shoes. Like some kids rob and kill to survive in life.

And like me I got caught with 92 grams of dope and, but I'm not a bad kid. I just sell dope to survive in life. I'm not the block on the block trying to be hard, but to survive and get money

-Baby the Fly Kid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good you wrote this - there are a lot of people who don't understand that some people sell dope because they really think they have no other choice. And yeah, you're the only one who can know what it's like to be in your shoes, but it sounds like those shoes you're wearing are bringing you a lot of pain and tiring out your young feet - isn't it time you took them off? Do you think it might be possible for you to find another job? One that doesn't tear you away from your loved ones and put you in dangerous situations and mess up your schedule? There are plenty of organizations out there in Oakland that were made exactly for people like you, to help you figure out ways of making a living that don't take the life out of you. Let us know if you'd like us to give you some phone numbers - or talk to your R.O. about help linking up with one of your organizations. You deserve to thrive, not just survive.

Angel Angel Don't Go Away

Going through hella pain, Flooding through my veins,
Time's like a river, just won't stop
Pain and stress in my brain cells, They just won't go away. I'm in this cell thinking to myself

Will I ever prevail,

Or will I go toHell? But hold up

I feel an angel at my side, She says don't worry,
Soon you'll see the sunshine, But I tell her I'm down,
I'm weak, I can't move, I can't think straight, I'm afraid
And you tell me Don't cry, don't worry, you'll see the sunshine. I'm hopeless,
just tryna cope with this life I'm living.

Angel Angel, don't go away. Stay with me, help me see my future.

My life that I keep missing, I feel the devil creeping
Do you feel it,

Do you see it? I feel it I see it, it's running back and forth through my

Life, so please stay with me.

Angel Angel don't go away. Let me lead your way.

-Chuckie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Marvelous. It's really in that last line that the deepest meaning of this poem comes through. The angel is the only ray of hope you have in the terror and darkness of your world... it's all you can do to hold on to her - but then at the end you say "Let me lead your way"! See, it's you who leads. This angel is real but this angel was created by you. She is your strength, your courage, your ability to make the best of the worst. You have the power only one who can lead yourself out of your pain.

I Am From

I am from Oakland
where I saw a lot of people get killed.
I see a lot of couple's fight for their life
so they can make it.

I see kids

moms

out there

struggling

so they can put food in their stomachs and keep a roof over they head.

In Oakland, it's hard for everybody.

If you don't have a high school diploma, you are not going to have a nice job.

You will, but not a good paying job.

Peace out, Beat.

This is yo' boy, Lil' Sam. God bless.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't doubt a word you are saying because unfortunately, in Oakland a lot of people have, and continue to lose their lives over bull. We believe you are getting your high school diploma very soon? Right? If you don't, like you said, it will be harder for you to move up in life? Don't just stop there; get your college diploma. What do you plan on doing once you touch down in Oakland again? We hope you decide to stop doing what brought you behind bars because you already know what kind of future that will lead you: A very dark one.

Hopefully, this is my last time
writing to the Beat, but I don't
think, so till next time Beat.

Who Am I Mad At?

I'm mad at you all at The Beat. Y'all be playing too much, saying you 'bout to put my papa' in there, but then y'all come back the next week like this old, "We 'bout to put it in the next one." I been here for a good minute and y'all ain't put nothing in there I write. So y'all need to stop playin', 'cause I ain't writing no' mo'.

-Baby Face, Marin

From The Beat: If your pieces were not published, the reason could have been that your pieces were not appropriate to be printed in our publication. Due to some past writings that risked hurting you and/or our program, we have to be strict about the pieces we publish. We hope you understand. And if we have been slacking, then allow us to apologize. Sorry. We hope to see your work in The Beat in the near future.

School Completes You

Money can't buy love. Money can't buy trust. Money can buy time in jail and that's messed up. Why I say that 'cause I been there and done that, I was robbing, stealing, and maybe even killing. I was stupid at the time and my eyes were shut. The streets had me in the palm of it hand. It took my freedom, family and my real friends. I started smoking weed and spending all I got, selling dope and wasting my time on the block.

Now I'm in the Walden House in a drug program trying to keep myself up. It's hard to live and my life was screwed up, but now I think out the box. What I mean is the program Walden House made me think a lot. The street ain't worth it and it will chew you up and spit you out.

So when I get out, I will start my life over and get a job, finish going to school, and listen next time to my first thought. All that I am trying to say is go to school. That will make your life complete one day.

-T1, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: It's easy to fall into the trap of the money chase, and it's deadly when that chase combines with drug selling and drug use. You are very smart to take advantage of this program to learn what you need to learn to live a sober life, and you are even wiser to know that school is the key to everything. Keep learning... and keep teaching.

What Makes Me Happy

He makes me happy
The little things he does
The way he smiles at me
When I'm sad and he hugs me
When he first said, "I love you"
When he gives me his thinking look
The things he does for me
His beautiful chocolate eyes
That what makes me happy

-A Money, Marin

From The Beat: He sounds like a terrific guy, so what are you doing messing up, getting locked up and being away from him? How is he doing with you in juvy? It's time for you to start getting back what's yours or else you will loose it.

The Streets Raised Me

Honduras is where I was born.
The place I was raised was La Ceiba.
I lived there 'til I was ten years old, then I moved to the USA.

Really, I'm not from anywhere—I'm from the streets.
The streets raised me up physically and mentally.

-Yong A, Marin

From The Beat: Since you write that the streets raised you, do you consider your homies in the streets your real family? Where is your Honduran family? Why don't you write a piece about how and who in the streets brought you up?

Thank God I Woke Up!

When I wake up, I say to myself, "Thank God I woke up and I'm still alive."

I think to myself, "Will I ever get out of juvenile hall?"
As the time goes by, I say to myself, "I wasted days of my life

for doing something without thinking."

I think to myself, "When the day I die, everything isn't going to be there any more."

I wait and see if my brother and sister and mom is ever going to wake up,
and what I am going to do for the day?"

-Dennis, Marin

From The Beat: Good thinking. Sometimes it takes the shock of getting ripped out of their normal lives and sent to juvy to get young people to realize how precious their family, their lives on the outs and freedom are. Do you think your brother, sister and mom wake up thinking about you? We bet they are. We hope that once you're free again, your memories of juvy will remind you how you felt when you were inside.

As I'm Sitting

I'm waiting, been here for a long time
Wanna get home, be with my family and waste no time
I reminisce in everything that can be done
I reminisce in everything I ever done
I'm tired of this--always carrying bags
I see my child smile, but my baby mama sad
If I make it out of this, can I succeed?
Or just call my brother-in-law and smoke some weed?
I think like this: "Everything happen for a reason"
But if you keep on that road, then you'll be no longer breathin'

It's funny, 'cause the world keeps spinning
"You should love your neighbor" is all the preacher preachin'

So when I get home, the star is all I'm gon' be reaching

-Famoso LCRS

From The Beat: Wonderful poem, Famoso. It seems like you've made up your mind that regardless of what others decide about going straight back to the streets when they get off the Ranch, that you're going home. You may have loved the romance, the glamour, even the danger and drama of the streets, but that because your baby mama is sad and your baby needs to see your smile—that you're going to be strong enough to stay off the block. We hope so, Famoso. You can do it!

My Story

What's upper Beat? Well, my name is Vanessa. Here is my little story.

I was locked up in San Jose J-Hall. I did five month there. I got sentenced to a one-year program and here I am. I've been here a week already. I'm trying my hardest not to run and do my program. It's just hard for me. I miss my family a lot.

It feels good that I got my freedom back once again. Even though I'm here I still feel good. Right now I'm going to try my hardest to work on myself because I know I need it. I'm proud of myself because even though I've been out only a little bit of time, I'm doing what I promised myself, and it's to take care of business and stay out the system.

I really don't want to go back to the hall, so I am going to do my time. I just want to share that because youngsters who are getting out from the hall take care of business, you have your whole life ahead of you. So take time to work on you. There is people who really care and want to help.

-Nessa, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Were you in The Beat workshops at Hillcrest? It seems like you're torn between running back to what you miss so much (home), and staying to get the most out of this program. All we can tell you, Nessa, is that if you run, you're running right back into that situation where you have no freedom. We hope you give yourself a reasonable amount of time here for the maximum benefit. You don't want to be a slave to the system and you don't want to be a slave to drugs. Here is the place where you can break both those addictions. Don't let yourself down.

First Thing

The first thing I do in the morning is thank God, for living another day and for being who I am and to thank the people that are around me and my friends that care about me and love me for who I am.

-Cameron, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is an impressive practice, to wake up everyday being thankful for all the positive things in your life. Not everyone sees the world that way. You're lucky, but also strong.

Mi Tristeza

Q-Vole Beat? Pues, como estan? Pues, esto que les voy a contra es sobre mi tristeza. Pues, tengo como 10 meses aqui encerrado sin poder salir aqui afuera a la calles. Estoy cansado de ver sufrir a mi familia. Mi madre siempre cuando viene a visitarme, siempre llora. Pues, me siento mal al verla siempre llorar.

Este vato esta cansado de este vida traidora. Es mi primera vez escribiendo en The Beat Within. Espero que pongan esta lineas.

Siempre le pido a Diosito que cuide de mi familia y que no les pase nada malo. Aveces le digo a Dios que porque no me muri el dia que mi madre me dio luz? Pues, vine a esta tierra para ser algo en la vida, para darle orgullo a mi genete, pero miren donde estoy ahorita y lo que estoy? Soy un pandillero que ni vale la pena? En vez que la gente nos miren, nos dan la espalda por lo que somos. Pues, me despido con mi lapis y el papel.

Pues gracias, beat, por darme la chanza de escribir estas lineas.

From The Beat: Con que hayas cometido errores en la vida, no te da el derecho en decir que no vales la pena y que tu vida tiene que continuar de la manera como la has llevado? Si tu Dios te trajo al mundo, fue porque tienes algun proposito. A lo mayor tu proposito es de cambiar y ser un gran ejemplo para todos los jovenes que estan en la misma situacion que tu estas? Tu puedes ser un gran ejemplo, y haci mismo, ayudar a muchos. Estamos seguro que si llegas a cambiar tu vida, despues de haber sido una persona muy equivocada, haras orgulloso ha toda tu familia completa. Quieres orgulloso a tu madre? Tu puedes!

My Sadness

What's up, Beat? Well, how are y'all doing? Well, what I am going to share with y'all is about my sadness. Well, I have been locked up for ten months and unable to get out of here and go outside to the streets. I am tired of seeing my family suffer. Every time my mother comes to visit me, she always cries. Well, I feel bad seeing her always cry.

This dude is tired of this triffin' life. This is my first time writing in The Beat Within. I hope they put these lines in.

I always pray to God to take care of my family and I hope nothing bad happens to them. Sometimes I ask God, "Why didn't I die the day my mother gave birth to me?" Well, I came to this Earth to be something in life, to make my people proud, but look at where I am at right now and look at what I am, y'all? I am a gangster that it's worth anything? Instead of people looking at us, they turn their backs on us for what we are. Well, I bid y'all farewell with my pencil and my paper.

Well, thanks Beat, for giving me the chance to write my lines.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Even though you committed these errors in your life, it doesn't give you the right to say that you are not worth anything and that your life has to continue the way you have led it? If God brought you into this world, it was because you had some kind of purpose. Maybe your purpose is to change and be a huge example for all the juveniles that are in the same situation that you are in? You can be a huge example, and by doing so, help out a lot. We're positive that if you do happen to change your life, after others had you mistaken for someone else, you'll make your whole family proud! Do you want your mother to be proud? You can!

No, Este Lugar Va A Ser Peor

Hey, que tranzas, Beat? Como estan todos? Pues, espero que esten bien. No se aguiten que algun dia vamos a salir de este lugar que no es para nosotros.

Bueno, yo estoy triste porque pense que ya me iba a ir de este lugar, pero no fue haci. Supuestamente, el 9 era mi ultimo corte, pero nomas me dijeron que regresaria el 7 de Marzo, pero esa vez, iba a ser la ultima corte. Pues, tengo fe en Dios que me va ayudar a salir de aqui pronto.

Siempre que regreso de la corte. Me pongo bien triste y deseperado de la vida. No se porque la vida me trata asi, pero ni modo, tengo que ser fuerte y salir adelante con mi vida. Ya llebo 7 meses aqui y la verdad es que yo no quiero ir a la nueva Hall. Dicen que esta bien fea. Ya no voy a poder abrazar a mis padres porque va a estar una ventana en medio de los dos.

La verdad es que esta bien duro en la nueva Hall. Por eso, homies, portensen bien y salgan de aqui y no vuelvan a caer otra vez aqui porque ya no va a ser lo mismo. Esa nueva hall parece como una prision. Parece San Quentin. Bueno homies, cuidensen.

From The Beat: Esperamos que Dios escuche tus suplicas y que puedas salir de este lugar pronto. Crees que esta experiencia te haya ayudado a refleccionar y ver las cosas como realmente son? Crees que despues de esta experiencias te dediques a vivir una vida tranquila lejos de lugares donde te puedan metere en problemas? Tienes que seguir con tu vida como tu lo has dicho y para hacer eso vas a tener que necesitar de un gran cambio de tu vida. Estando en este lugar lo unico que te esta haciendo es detenerte en tu continuacion.

No, This Place Is Going To Be Worse

Hey, what's up, Beat? How is everyone doing? Well, I hope that y'all are doing well. Don't get hella sad because one day, we're going to get out of this place that is not for anyone.

Well, I am sad because I thought that I was going to get out of this place a long time ago, but things didn't go done like that. Supposedly, the 9th was my last court date, but they just told me to come back March 7th, but that was going to be my last court date. Well, I have faith in God that he is going to help me get out of here real soon.

Every time I come back from court, I get very sad and lose hope to keep on living. I don't know why life treats me like that, but regardless, I have to be strong and continue striving forward with my life. I have been in here for seven months and the truth is I don't want to go to the new Hall. They say that it is very ugly. I will no longer be able to hug my parents because a window is going to be between us.

The truth is it is very hard in the new Hall. That's why, homies, behave yourselves and get out of here and don't end up in this place again because it is not going to be the same. That new Hall looks like a prison. It looks like San Quentin. All right, take care of yourselves.

-Lil' C , 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that God hears your pleas and that you are able to get out of this place very soon. Do you believe that this experience has helped you to reflect and see things for what they really are? Do you believe that after these experiences, you are going to dedicate yourself to live a calm life, far way from places that can get you in problems? You have to continue with the life that you have said and in order to do that, you're going to be in need of a huge change in your life. Being in this place, that only thing that you are accomplishing is keeping yourself from progressing.

Trying To Fit Perfectly

I am a puzzle piece, trying to fit perfectly
I am a diamond, rough on the edges, but always shining
I am a piece of driftwood, floating away
I am a rose, blooming in spring

-Arianna, Marin

From The Beat: Why don't you take one of these images and expand on it? For example, if you are a piece of driftwood, floating away, where do you go? Are you now free? Are you lost? Are you simply adrift? Do you have a destination that you reach? Please elaborate...

Lo Que Me Hace Sentir Mal

Que onda Beat? Soy el vato de Livermore, haciendo un poco de tiempo aquí adentro. La vida que yo vivo es muy difícil en las calles que diario tienes que estar peleando con todos los pinche levas.

Ya estoy adentro y no tengo nada mas que hacer. Les voy a contar algo. Cuando llegue aqui, fue el dia 28 de Diciembre del 2006. Fui arrestado en la manana a las 11:50 en mi trabajo. La neta, fue muy triste para mi ya que en el Ano Nuevo, le di nada pura lagrimas a mi familia.

Fui arrestado junto con mis dos hermanos. Mi familia dice que fue bien espantoso porque llegaron como diez señores del F.B.I. y cinco policíes de Livermore y un helicóptero.

Solo quiero que me perdone mi jefita por mis errors y ojala y pronto pueda salir de aqui. Ojala que Dios le de la oportunidad de salir a mis carnales y a todos ustedes que estan laquiados.

Trucha. I hope you vatos get out.

From The Beat: Nos imaginamos que esto debio haber sido un golpe bien grande para tu madre el hecho de que tres de sus hijos esten preso. Nosotros te hemos observado y hemos llegado a la conclusion que tienes la capacidad de mejorar tu vida y de ayudar a los demas. Tienes el corazon bueno y eso es lo que importa. Deberias dejar llevarte mas de las cosas que tu corazon dicta que lo que tus amigos o malas influencias te dicen que hagas. No permites que tus errores te quiten todo lo que tienes: Tu vida, tu familia, tu felicidad, y libertad. Despierta amigo; ya no eres el mismo chiquillo de antes. Date cuenta de eso.

What It Makes Me Feel

What's up, Beat? I'm the dude from Livermore, doing a little bit of time here on the inside. The life that I live is very difficult in the streets that you daily have to fight with all the freakin' weak-ninjas.

I'm already inside and I don't have anything else to do. I'm going to tell y'all something. When I came in here, it was December 28, 2006. I was arrested in the morning at 11:50 at my job. To tell y'all the truth, it was very sad for me because for the New Year, I gave my family nothing but tears.

I was arrested with my two brothers. My family says that it was very scary because like ten officers from the F.B.I. came and five police officers from Livermore and a helicopter.

I just want my mother to forgive me for my errors and hopefully, and soon, I can get out of here. Hopefully God gives my brothers the opportunity to get out of here and to everyone that's locked up.

Watch over yourselves. I hope you dudes get out.

-Lil' C, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can only imagine that this must have been a huge hit for your mother to know that three of her children are locked up. We have been observing you and we have come to the conclusion that you have the capacity to better your life and to help others out. You have a good heart and that is what is important. You should allow yourself to be lead more by what your heart dictates than what your friends or bad influences tell you to do. Don't allow for your errors to take away everything that you have: Your life, your happiness, and your freedom. Wake up, friend; you're not the same little boy anymore. Realize this.

A Chance To Speak

If I had a chance to speak, I would probably tell my parents that I love them, but the truth is I know I wouldn't, because I never have. Every time I get in an argument with them, I end up saying that, "I wish I didn't live here." Well, I guess I got my wish and it's going to last quite a long time.

-Troublesome, Marin

From The Beat: Sire you say you love your parents, why don't you tell them so? What are you waiting for? Do they tell you they love you? Everybody says some nasty stuff when they argue, and when the argument is over, it still can hurt, sometimes for a long time. Parents can be especially vulnerable to anything cruel that their child says or yells at them, so if you've said stuff you know now you didn't mean, why don't you apologize and let them know?

Just A Lil' Advice, Beat

What it do, Beat? It's ya boy, Young Jeff, feel me, up here at the Ranch, bangin' what it do and what it do is my 'hood. But I'm not about to get in the turf talk; I'm trying to keep my head above water an' climb the mountain, because if I fall, it can be a long drop.

I don't know, Beat, maybe you can give me some advice about the street life and how to survive. I know about the street life and how to survive, but I wanna know what you think and what type of advice you would give a brotha like me to stay strong. I mean, I have a few ideas, but it's always good to have more ideas, so, yea, what'su p wit' me.

Some people say I play around too much, but I can get serious, so holla at me, Beat, and don't forget to give me some advice about living, but yeaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa.

-Young Jeff LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We so appreciate your commitment to writing and **The Beat Within**, thank you! As far as advice about street life, please, you know better than us, street life is a set-up for a great fall. The best way to survive is to get out of the life, no half-steppin' either, all the way out! We are interest in your few ideas on how to stay out of the system? We also suggest you take **The Beat** publication serious ly and read the many, many "From The Beat" responses in **The Beat Within** as well as pieces in **The BWO!**

No Mac And Cheese

When I'm sleeping
I'm dreaming of home
My little brother an' sister
Watching "Finding Nemo"
Eating macaroni an' cheese
Then I wake up
I realize I'm in a cell
A place I hate
Not the comfort of my home
Not with loved ones, but the opposite
With mean people who seem to not care
Not no mac an' cheese, but mystery meat
Not warm but cold
Not happy but sad
Not with my man
But wit' some mean lady
That's what happens when I wake up
Bye!

-A Money, Marin

From The Beat: Nie poem, A Money! It's really touching. It is the little things you remember, like when you watch your younger brothers and sisters when they don't know you're looking at them, that can really make you lonely for them. They must be missing you as much as you do them. We hope you get to go home soon and you succeed!

Mad At Myself

There's really nobody to be mad at
Besides myself
I can't point no fingers at my parents
Or my siblings, just me
I'm mad at myself for messin' up again
Back in the halls for the third time
It's my fault, not theirs!
I did what I did, and that is done
And I got what I deserved
But what I got really sucks
So like I said
I can't really point no fingers
'Cause I'm the one that messed up
And that's that.

-Queen Bee, Marin

From The Beat: Accepting responsibility for what you do is a good sign of becoming mature. What are you going to do next after messing up? Do you have a plan out of this mess you've gotten yourself into? Is there a way out? If so, show it us and let us learn from you.

My Mind And Struggles

My definition of being a man is different than everybody else's. Everybody else's is responsibility, having a job and all that.

Why I say I don't know the definition about being a man is, is because I'm never gonna change and I don't know what a man is, because I get information about being a man on both sides of the fence and the side that I mainly get information about being a man is by my big homies or other ninjas in the streets.

So my definition of being a man is they definition, which is doing what you gotta do in the streets and getting your 'hood name out there, basically handling your business for the block. So that's just a few more things I think about and that be on my mind when I wake up.

But, yea, man, holla at me, Beat. This Young Jeff at the Ranch, doing his thang, ready to touch down in a few. But I'll never know--maybe I'll have a different mindset and thought pattern about the streets, like doing what I do, but right know I'm thuggin' it out until my struggle ends.

-Young Jeff LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well Jeff, if you flat out state that you are never gonna change, what could anyone say to you? What would you like for us to say to you? Define for us what a man is! You have a take on this young one. You know better than many of us, give you have seen the bleak side (the homies) as well as the successful side of being a respectful man. So do you believe what your homies tell you about being a man? Obviously not, but still you follow them? Or not? If you want our take, of course we can get on our soap box, but we think it's a waste of our time, unless you are open to hear us, open to change, want to change, see a better route to take, if you are ready and willing to make the biggest change in your life, we are down to help you see a better way, the first step to being a good man, is being your own man, making your own choices, not being a follower, not worrying about what others think. Step up Jeff, it's not going to be easy, but it will be the best thing you ever done with your life.

I have to be a man and keep my work to show everyone that I can be a good father and a different person from who I am right now.

Who Am I Mad At?

I am mad at myself because I am listening to my brain telling me to do some stupid stuff, like listening to my homies and riding around looking for trouble. I know I could be training my brain to do the right thing, like being on the outs with my "baby girl", because she's going to have a baby.

I know that I don't belong here. I belong with her, protecting her from any trouble. That's my responsibility now. I have to be a man and keep my work to show everyone that I can be a good father and a different person from who I am right now. Gangs don't take you anywhere.

I have to go. But listen - if you are going to be a dad -take responsibility. Do what's right. Be on the outs and live happily with your baby. Teach him or her how to stay out of the streets.

-Michael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: OK, time to stop being mad, and to start doing what you know you have to do. This is a good piece, and you've said the "right" things. Now make them come true. And do not be afraid to ask for help. It is a sign of strength to ask for help when you really need it.

I'm from Hand-Me-Downs And Busted Cable

I'm from hand-me-downs and busted cable
 W're moms was scrappin' to put food on the table
 Where I'm from, you gotta learn how to hustle and survive
 Where days don't square up, they be fightin' wit' guns and knives
 I'm from where everyone sellin' trees and choppin' rocks
 Here on every corner, do tricks and knocks
 Told myself I was gon' come out the struggle and gon' make it big
 If not, have a bad dude wit' some gold to dig
 Told myself, "Always have chips in the pocket and shine like a star
 Fresh new fits and twenty-twos on the car

-Baby Face, Marin

From The Beat: You do struggle, from what you write. How can you use your talents out of the streets and into the wider world? Regardless of what people on your block do, how can you use your many talents to succeed without hustling in anything illegal that will only get you in trouble? What's your plan? You're young and might as well use the whole world as your opportunity to shine like a star.

I Am From Chicken Chow Mein Monday Nights

I am from chicken chow mein Monday nights
 Cereal every morning
 I am from the county across the Golden Gate
 We stay with trees. Don't hate
 I am from the bottom of the ocean, the deep ocean sea
 Me and my sea critters stay poppin' E
 I am from the Hamilton's—Danny's house is where I stay
 A witch can run up—they know I don't play

-Dexter, Marin

From The Beat: Very imaginative depiction of yourself. Where do you live that you have chicken chow mein every Monday night, or do you mean Marin juvy? How is it that your sea critters and you are from the bottom of the ocean? Why not write more about your living at the Hamilton's house? Do you think of them as family?

My Brothers

You was my ninja, my nerd, my joy, my main man
 My duce, my other, my partner
 I was teacher, he was father
 I skilled, he schooled
 We chilled, we moved
 We thugged, we hung
 We ate, we slept
 We lived, we died
 I stayed, you left
 Remember we stayed in trouble
 'Cause we wasn't to ourselves
 Remember Rula hand over the keys
 And told us not to go to the Point
 So we went straight to the block
 The squads, my brother
 The people you left behind
 Is my brothers

-J-Stubba LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Mysterious, brilliant, heartbreaking poem. For whom or about whom did you write it? Is this person still alive? When you write that he left you behind, do you mean that he's gone to the next world? How did he abandon you? This is really sad. That you just hint at what happened to him, rather than describing it, only makes your poem more evocative.

I Open My Eyes

I open my eyes and what do I see.
 I see two vatos looking straight at me.
 They don't say anything, but I know that their intentions are bad.
 Don't know what they want. Don't know what to give them.
 What should I do? My intentions are the same.
 What should I do? I am running out of options.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We know that this is a way of saying that you're facing a serious situation, and that you're feeling helpless. We have become very fond of you at The Beat, and we wish we could help you. The fact is, we have only our very best wishes for you. We hope the justice system recognizes your basic decency. We do.

James Brown Makes Me Frown

as i open my eyes from what is called sleep
i try to remember the important things in my dream
as i lay back waiting to listen to james brown
i feel my toes single and i feel my face frown
the thing i remember is that i'm in the hall
and walk around thinking this is not good at all

-Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another terrific little poem! Hope you didn't mind us changing the title to James Brown ... but we knew at least a few would find your piece easily and laugh out loud, even if it's not really funny being where you are. Stay strong.

Childhood Fears

I remember when I was little and I used to be scared of tall trees when it rain because the trees looked malevolent and had branches that look like there were going to grab me. I remember that same day I could hear the whistling wind and it was very cold, like Alaska.

After I heard the wind blow, I heard a big bang and when I turned around it was two cars that had an accident. One of the cars was flipped over and was on fire. It was really a big mess because the car lights, windows and bumper was broken, but at least no one has died and that was the first time I seen or heard a car accident.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think you saw a movie with scary trees that made you scared, or was it just your imagination that made you think those branches were malevolent? It's interesting that you remember the wind and cold at the same time you remember the accident. When the wind blows now and it's cold, does it remind you of this event?

I Wish There Was A Way

If only there was a way for me to show you I'm the perfect man.

If only there was a way for me to show and prove to your parents

That they don't have to stress or worry
And just believe and give me their trust.

I wish there was a way for me to give you roses.
I wish there was a way for me to love you by the dozens.
And I tell you how I really feel about you from the bottom of my heart.

I wish there was a way for us to cuddle on the beach
And look at the stars at dark.

I wish there was a way for me to be yo' man.
The struggles I went through
But I'm not the same man.

I wish there was a way for us to be combined
And trust one another and live a good life.

I wish there as a way for me to say, "I love you."
But first, there has to be a way for me to trust you.

I'm sure it goes the other way around, too.
But you just have to give me a chance or a few.

I wish there was a way for me to tell you what I dream about.

How you lay next to me--on my chest is where you lean.
I know there's many way for me to express myself.

But at the moment I ask God to just bless ourselves.

That me and you will last and just make it work
And when the troubles come through our hearts, it won't hurt.

'Cause me and you together will be nothing but strong love.

-A new man, Marin

From The Beat: Nice. We hope you sent it to whoever you wrote it to. You don't need to be perfect for her, her parents or anybody. Can you just let her parents and your lady get to know and trust the real you slowly? But of course you being in jury may set you back, so how are you going to handle that, once you're free again? What is your plan to prove to yourself and others that you can remain free?

What's On My Mind

What's up Beat? This ya boy, Lil' Scari aka Da Youngsta. Man, I'm 'bout to let y'all know what's been on my mind fo' about three months now, and it's been messin' me up. It's like a three-in-one package.

The first thing is my family. I go to sleep every night knowing my lil' bra on da outs runnin' the streets at night, not doin' what moms tell him to. Man, it's crazy out there. People getting shot left and right, and if my lil bra get hit, I'm go raise hell in these weak-ass new halls.

Da second thing is my time is coming to a end in these new halls and I don't know what they go do with me. But I gotta stay strong and keep my head up.

And the third thing is girls. But I'm out.

-Lil Scari U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're not sure why you would raise hell in the hall if something bad happens to your brother. Do you feel responsible for the choices he's making? Did you listen to your moms when she told you to stay off the streets and come home? So, why do you think your little brother will do things any different from the way you did them? He's looking to you as his role model, and whatever you tell him in words, he will always follow what you do and not what you say. So, our advice for you when you get out of this situation and you're back home is don't do anything that you don't want him to do too. (We took out your insulting description of the girls in here...)

What's On My Mind

When I wake up in the morning I think I'm at home, because I'll dream about me and my family kicking it at the house, talking, eating, singing and stuff like that. Then when I wake up, I'm blinded by the lights, asking myself, "Where am I at?"

When I can finally see where I'm at, I see the four walls, toilet and sink. Then I'll think, damn! got to do the same stuff over and over again. Eating the nasty breakfast, got to brush my teeth and stuff, like that. Damn!

Mainly, what I think about is my little nephew because I don't want him to end up like me and his daddy. I don't know how to explain it, but if anything happens to him I'll go crazy. I'm hella mad because I got to be in here for my nephew's birthday. But when I got out it's gonna be cool!

-Lil Kut U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That is the harsh reality of where you're at. Hopefully the frustration of being in there is enough to motivate you to do something different. You can never really be there for your nephew if you're going in and out of the system. Plus, he doesn't need your words of love as much as your example of love, meaning he will follow what you do, not what you say. If you truly love him and want him to avoid ending up like his daddy and you, then you must model your life in a way that you wouldn't be ashamed for him to copy. Are you up to that? Are these just thoughts, or are you going to make these thoughts into a reality?

Body Far But Heart Close

I don't sleep well to begin with, so when I do wake up it hurts even more when I realize I wasn't even in my own bed, in my own room, and in my own home to begin with. I expect to shake off my blankets and walk on soft carpet floor, but instead I get a rough cold floor. What a horrible wake-up call and the voice coming out of the speaker in the wall doesn't make it any better.

Saying that this is all sad would be an understatement. The small windows make the outside would seem so far and my family and friends even farther. I came to peace with myself and even this place knowing that I will be getting out. To be stuck in this illusion or alternate reality is painful in all areas of the mind, body, and soul.

Not everything is as far as it seems. My heart remains close with my loved ones though and it'll be even closer when I'm free.

-Khanh U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It appears that the real "wake-up call" is just the fact that you are here, separated from all you love. Will this be enough of a wake-up call for you to change whatever you need to change in order to avoid this consequence in the future?

Three-Hundred-And-Sixty-Five Things On My Mind

Since I came back from court, I got about a year's worth of things on my mind.

Yup, the judge gave me a year.

It's hard thinking about doing it.

It seems impossible, and then I think about being away from my family,
and then it seems like I'm a die. But I take a deep breath and realize
everything will work out. So I keep my head up and stay out the drama.

-Bugzy, Marin

From The Beat: It seems like you've learned patience and to take life step-by-step in juvy, which sometimes is all you can do, especially when the juvenile justice system is pretty much deciding your immediate future for now. Everything will work out. We're sorry you're suffering. Stay focused and determined to succeed!

Breaking Time Down

Time is everything, everything we do is time. We doin' time but ninjas don't understand time. If somebody broke time down, ninjas wouldn't want to be beefin'. We don't get too much time to live this short life we have. And for the reader, break that time down. We know its 365 days in a year, 52 weeks in a year, 24 hours in a day, 60 seconds in a min. Break time down.

-Quez U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sounds like you've been spending some serious time thinking about "time." So what does knowing all of this mean to you and your future? Will you value your "time" more and not do the same things that got you incarcerated? If so, then this "time" was worth it because you learned a valuable lesson from it.

Don't Come Here

I'm telling you--don't come to the Ranch. See, the saying goes, "You come to LCRS and you're gonna die." This is your last time to be perfect in life. People who work here care so much, they will take your week, just to save you from the streets of San Francisco.

Me, personally, I think what they're doing is bullshhh. How can you save somebody who wants to die or who is already dead, but still breathing? Don't get mad at the harshness of my words, people. What I'm saying is true, and the truths get people mad. They treat us like little lads, but expect us to be our age. This is weak.

-H LCRS

From The Beat: It's true that some counselors believe that for some of you that as soon as some of you hit the streets again and are free, you'll forget how much you hate being locked up and will go straight to messing up again, big time. But those who predict that fate, say it out of profound grief and feelings of helplessness, because they try with their deepest strength, wisdom and compassion to guide all of you to reconsider your lives on the outs, so you'll live happy and successful lives, not hang in the streets and risk death every day you're out there.

What I Want

I want to get high.

I want to smoke a blunt.

I feel like smoking from a bong, or hitting the hash, but I can't,
because I'm locked up.

I want to hit the cocaine.

I want to sniff cocaine, but I can't because I am locked up.
I know I have a problem that I have to control. That's why I'm locked up.

So, I'm going to get over my problem and start thinking of something else.

-Drug problem, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We congratulate you for being honest and for recognizing that you have a problem. Take some comfort in knowing that you can solve your problem. Literally millions of people have shared your problem and successfully overcome it. It will take strong desire and willpower, and a lot of hard work, but if you want to change, and you're willing to put in the work, you will change. We wish you good luck.

Who I'm Mad At

Well, the person I'm mad at is the DA, because she tends to make me look like a bad vato who doesn't give a darn about anything. But she is wrong. I know I'm a good guy. I just can't let them get to my head. I'll just kick back and try to prove them wrong. On the real, it seems to me that they're the ones who don't give a darn about anyone. They're the ones locking us up and trying to give us ridiculous amounts of time. Well, that's it for me. Alrato.

-locked up and frustrated, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Clearly, neither side truly understands the other. You have a hard time standing in the DA's shoes, and the DA seems not to be able to stand in yours. The DA might well say - "That's not my job. My job is to prosecute criminals and take the bad guys off the streets so that our communities will be safer." We believe there are many ways to serve justice. Clearly, some folks have earned a stretch in jail. And perhaps not quite so clearly, some young offenders, and the community, would be better served by more imaginative and more humane 'punishment'. But a way to bridge the gap is to start with respect for the positions of those with whom you disagree. For your part, have you considered how you might make the argument, through your attorney, that you've truly learned something from the unpleasant experience you find yourself in? Have you figured out how to come to terms with any injuries you may have caused others? In short, have you learned important lessons, and are you operating from good faith and a commitment to change your life? Think about these things, deeply, Mr. Anonymous. What can you do that you haven't done that might help convince everyone involved that justice would be served by an alternative punishment?

Locked Up For My Birthday

Why is the reason I find myself screwing up? Now I find myself in the hall, locked up for my birthday. I should have known running with my girl was wrong, but I decided to mess up anyway.

I let other people control my actions, and I care about my friends more than my family. Now I find the people that I thought were my friends are not doing the time for the actions and I'm here locked up for them. I learned the hard way and I should have known my friends will not always be there, but my family will always be there.

-Annie, Marin

From The Beat: You've learned a rough lesson in life. Lots of youngsters in juvy have been enormously hurt and betrayed by their so-called friends, but also by their families. Honestly, the only way to protect yourself is to stay out of any mess, listen to yourself and learn to trust yourself, because, as you've now learned, you can end up paying for everybody in time locked down. What will this experience teach you? Has it taught you anything? What?

I Am From

Growing up with no role model
Never having a road to follow
Hot summer nights
Street light with no lights
Nine years old, wanna be grown
11 years old, got a cellular phone
Blocks lined full of apartments
Running out of space like a cramped compartment
Not knowing success, but know how to fail
Parents not surprised when their son's in jail
More drugs than a pharmacy
As much leadership as a democracy
Not scared of the boogie man
But frightened and run away from the white man
Death on the street
It's like the end of a beat
It was good while it lasted
Best friend said, "I'll be back"

But we know what happened, so let's leave it at that

-Yung Hogg U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You did a good job of describing the life you were born into. But we're unsure about what your intentions are from this point forward. We hope when you write, "It was good while it lasted," that you mean you're turning a corner, doing something different, and keeping yourself free. If that is your desire, tell us your plan to achieve it.

Mad At...

I'm mad at myself because sometimes I feel weak inside. So I don't let my feelings get in the way because they might try to take advantage of that. So I show no fear. I show no love. And I show no weakness, because like I said – people can and will take advantage.

-Afraid, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Our advice is to show your love and to acknowledge your fear. It's true that some people try to take advantage of others. But that can happen wherever you are. To be fully human, you must recognize all parts of yourself. Love, fear, kindness – these are all parts of being a human being. Don't let fear dictate your behavior and turn you into a man who pretends he doesn't have the same strengths and weaknesses that we all have. We guarantee you that life will be better for you if you attempt to deal openly and honestly with all of your emotions. Pretending that you're a tough guy is a lousy way to live. Being kind, considerate, gentle and loving is a much better way to live. Those folks you think are trying to take advantage of you should drop the act, too. They're at least as afraid as you are, if not more.

safe And sound At Home

When I wake up I feel lonely, cold and sad. All that is on my mind is that I want to go home and sleep and spend time with my family. I regret what I did to get into YGC. I wished it never happened.

Every time I open my eyes I wish I was home in my bed and under my warm blankets. All that is on my mind is that when I go home I'll see everyone there safe and sound, happily greeting me home.

-TSG U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are comforting yourself with a sweet dream, and one that can easily come true. But what's the next step after being embraced in that warm and loving environment? What changes will you make so that you never again have to write a sad piece about missing those you love? When you say you "regret" what got you here, we assume you mean that you never plan to do it again. Are we right?

I Am...

I am from hard depressed times
of a strong black woman
who made good go with bad and prospered
with freedom and dignity and ambition
to survive a harsh scary slow fast world
with no boundaries and no love
for the other side and all the love in the world for family
and allies.

-Shadie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a beautiful piece! You show the dark and the bright in equal light. This piece tells us not just where you're from, but what kind of a mind you have. We hope you keep writing.

My First Thoughts Of The Day

Every day I wake up my first thoughts are thank God for waking me up every morning. My next thought is about my 2-year-old daughter. I wish I could hold her in my arm, and kiss her, and play with her. I also miss my boyfriend, but my child really means more to me, and it hurts me to be in here and not with her. I know she wakes up in the middle of the night crying for me.

Every night I cry myself to sleep thinking about her. Iyanna Renee Brown. I would give any and everything to hold her in my arms one more time. This is not where I want her to end up. So this time is going to be different. When I get out this time I'm putting my little butterfly first. Mommy loves you, Sweetie!

-Alexis U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire you for acknowledging the fact that being in here means that you did not put your "little butterfly" first when you did whatever it was that led you here. Realizing that she is the most important person in your world right now is a sign that you have matured into a responsible young woman who understands what it means to be a mother. If you truly put her first when you get out, we don't expect ever to see you behind walls again. Good luck.

At The Moment

I'm stressin'.

I wanna change my life, 'cause life is a blessing'.
As I get my freedom, I'm tempted for a weapon.
I try to stay strong, but the enemies try to check it.
My life is a gift. I'm a live it wit' advantage.
I ain't tryin' to be a statistic
But on my path, I can forget it.
Sixteen was a lot, but now I'm okay pimp it.
I ask myself, "Am I go make it to the top in life
Or am I going to be six feet under?"
On my knees before my eyes close
Asking God to take me away
From this vicious cycle
Turf bangin' is the thing
And mo' money is what I need
I won't push hubba
But get a job and stay clean
My family think I'm hot-headed
But they know it's still coo' in me
RIP, Big cousin YG
Lord help me to be a better man

-Henny, Marin

From The Beat: It's good that you recognize that you may be tempted when you're free again, but you need to resist that impulse, no matter how angry you become. You already know that if you resort to turf banging to get your money, you may be looking at more incarceration, and you don't need that. There's a way out of this and you know which it is. So what are you waiting for? What's the plan?

My Family, My Case

What's on my mind is a lot of things just because I'm locked up. In the morning when I wake up, I brush my teeth. While I'm doing that, I think about my family. I wonder if they're all right or if something has happened to them. I'm just thinking about the worst thing that could happen makes me feel scared just because of the fact that if anything did happen, I wouldn't be able to do anything about it.

During the rest of my day, I think about my case. I think and wonder about what the judge or the DA are planning to do with me. But like ma one ninja said, “Expect the worst but always hope for the best.” An’ shhh, that’s all a ninja can do when he’s locked in a box.

-Young Meel U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We can understand why the uncertainty of your future would weigh heavily on your mind. What is “the worst” you expect, and what is “the best” you hope for?

Still Here

The first thing on my mind when I wake up is I am still here. I get to thinking about everything I left at home — my family, money, cars, game, girlfriend, my case, and even my folks on the block. It is crazy when I come in here. My whole mind frame changes.

I wanna do better. At least that's what I tell myself. There is a lot of things that go on in my brain when I wake up. I tell myself, "Not again, this stuff ain't for me. Let's make this my last time ever coming back here."

I hate leaving my family for weeks and months. That brings me down a lot. Every morning I tell myself this won't ever happen again. Ever again.

That's on my mind!

-B-Love U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wanting to do better is the necessary first step to actually doing better. So, we are encouraged by your mind frame. But what worries us is that you have been here before and you have told yourself (before) that you would never come back. But you did. So what will be different this time? What do you have to do (or stop doing) in order to keep this promise?

Plenty On My Mind

What is on my mind.

It is the fact that I got to go to a group home for six to nine months

and got to pay a lady four racks for restitution.

Also, the fact if I keep running from my home

I will get seven years of confinement time in CYA.

So I wake up thinking of how I can do better and how I can get out of Juvenile hall.

I will need to pass my program so I can get back on the outs and graduate high school.

So I have a lot on my mind that I need to do

so I can provide for my family. Because I have a girl who is three months pregnant

I ain't even sixteen.

I need to get out so I can be in my child's life and provide for my wife.

I will end by saying that I hope others who are in my situation will do the same

so they don't end up in the new hall or in the Y.

Also thanks to all my staff who have been there to help me all the way and my mom

who has visited me and showed me her love through all my failures;

it has made me who I am and who I will be so I can grow up and have a good life.

-Usher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We support you one hundred percent and really want to commend you for taking the situation you're in seriously and thinking hard about what you need to do to come out of it a good, healthy person. Your baby and wife are most definitely going to need you to take care of yourself and stay free, and they're lucky to have you. Remember to keep your priorities straight and stay focused—we know you can!

I Don't Care

Most people say I'm too bad for my age

But I stop and reply, "I don't care."

Went to the group home

Said I had to cut my hair

I said, "Yea, sure. I don't care."

Judge said I was doing many years

My attitude was, like, "I don't care."

If somebody don't read this

'Cause they do care

Well, guess what? "I don't care."

Lastly, tell everybody I don't care, 'cause I'm fresh like fabreez and I'm out of here, and I don't care.

-Young Sg, Marin

From The Beat: Maybe not caring is your problem and what's going to get you to a worse place than this one. Be careful for what you wish for. Is there something you care about? What is it? We bet that if they were to give you those years, you would care.

My Future Goals

I look at my past life and realize I want my future to be a lot better. Therefore I've made a lot of beneficial goals for myself that I intend to stick to. Especially because I have "if it's not beneficial it's not official," tatted on my back.

My first goal is to get a job and learn to take care of some responsibilities.

My second goal is to get my driver's license because I'm already about to be 17 and I never even had my permit.

I think if you want to have a good or better life for the future it is very necessary to make goals and try to accomplish them. So, the next step is to try it for yo'self.

-Jalisa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We think you are absolutely correct! And we really like that you are setting realistic and achievable goals. Life is like climbing a ladder. You don't jump from the bottom rung to the top, you have to climb one little step at a time. But the end result is that you reach the top!

My Mother and Sister's Birthday

What's up Beat? Dis is ya boy Yung Money. Beat I had missed two important days that meant the world to me. It's my mother and my sister's birthday. The reason I missed them is because I had to act a fool in the streets and get locked up and miss their birthday.

When I get out, I am going to make it up to them. I really want to take my mom out to a nice restaurant and show her a good time because I am her first-born son. I am going to show the love that she always shows me. She will love that for a little late birthday gift.

For my little sister birthday, I was going to buy her some shoes. I haven't seen my sister in so long all she wants to do is see me and that will be her favorite birthday gift.

-Yung Money U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Of course your mother will love to have you take her to dinner for that late birthday gift. But the truth is she wants the same thing from you that your sister wants, and that's you back in their lives. When you get back home, will you be able to give them what they want? The best gift you can give them is also the best gift you can give yourself, and that is a life of freedom.

I Miss

What's good? It's me. LaRonda. Today is March 2nd.

I'm feeling very sick. I miss my kids. I miss my life before drugs. I miss being happy. I miss my man. I miss being free!

I miss being free to do me and be happy. I miss the freedom to have sex at anytime I please. I miss freedom to go the bathroom after I eat!

I miss the freedom to speak my mind and talk how I would if I were home.

-LaRonda, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a good list of what you give up when you end up in the system. You had all that freedom you now miss so much, and you didn't respect it enough to hold on to it. With freedom comes responsibility (including the responsibility not to use drugs that can keep you from being the mother you need to be), and that is what you now have to exercise so that you never have to miss these things again.

Seventeen

thirteen, fourteen fifteen years old
coming into this dark place
leaving at sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years old
thinkin' the world hasn't changed
and everything is gonna be the same

— yet our folks be wanting us to
get right ... get paid ... get out

'cause we're adults now

yet we didn't do no growing up
didn't learn a thing about being grown
staff and structure, rules and regulations

that's all we know now

and we're still all children

i can see it in the sixteen year old

frontin' like she's all grown

i can see past her lies

she's only fifteen

my god — we're only children

children make adult decisions

adult problems, adult mistakes

for bloody's sake

most of us aren't even seventeen

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You get that right, girl! When they re-divided the world from adults and children to adult mistakes and adult problems vs childish ones — it was one of the worst mistakes since the world begun. Children in prison for a so-called adult decision — "for bloody's sake" what mistakes these adults make! Save the children from adults' decisions.

I Am From

I am from the banga
I hang out with the slangas
I am from the anxious
I hang out with the nervous
I am from the streets
so I am from a surface
I am from the whips
I am from the chips
I am from the jets
so I am from the bricks

I am from the heaven, I am from the hell
I am from the 'hood, so I am from a cell
I am from the city, I am from the Bay
I am from the "E" I am from "John Way"

-Young Woodro U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like the way you put these rhymes together. If being "from the 'hood" is the same as being "from a cell," then do you have any plans to take yourself out of the 'hood so that you can keep yourself out of the cell?

A Thug On the Inside

Even if an artist is what I am on the outside,
in the inside, I am still a thug.
I have a good side and a bad side to my spirit.
Of course, I've been fighting all of my life.
I can't tell you everything,
because it's too deep to tell, and it's personal.
I am trying to be a good guy — but inside of me, is
still the bad!

-Dizzy Bird, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nurture the good and starve the bad, otherwise you're sure to end up sad. It's not the good guy that got you locked up, but that bad guy in you who got so messed up with receiving hate and learning how to retaliate! But don't let incarceration be your fate! Work hard day by day outside and in, till the bad fades away, and begin to be someone who's free from his past — and free to stay free at last!

I'm From Nawlins

i'm from downtown new orleans
where all the lil' kids in the 'hood have big dreams
i say i'm from the ghetto, where the killas be postin'
yeah, i slept with rats and roaches
i'm from some infamous houses also known as the
projects
came to cali', now a lil' ninja got earn mo' respect
i'll make sho' ninjas r-e-s-p-e-c-t me
comin' from the fields where the ninjas never wear
white tees
black jeans, black tee-shirt
i'm from the jungle where a ninja quick to put yo' head
in the dirt
they don't like us and i don't give a what
i raise my fist put and my fingers up
fake-ass ninjas don't like me
don't be mad 'cause you can't be like me
i'm from the place where, everybody got somethin' on
they' waist
i see a dead body almost everyday
by the way — this the end of my story — that's all gotta
say.

-New Orleans, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write a mean streak. Those are hard words you speak. But you need to rise above geography and see that times have changed as well. You have grown to be a man. It's time you understand. The jail cell in which you do well is a hell of your own making. A man demands respect not by foolish risk taking, but by the loved ones who depend on the life he's making straight and strong and true -- it's time to be done new you.

I Am From

i am from a system
of unlawful success
where the day stays awake
and the night never rests
i am from a country
in which united we stand
yet when bush's money's low
we bomb our united land
i am from a city
where teens stay higher than grades
innocence gets taken from babies
during violent narcotic raids
i am from a society
where paper is my best friend
so until next time
that paper meets pen

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you say paper is your best friend, we hope you mean the words you write with a pencil or a pen. Money is a tool, but let money rule, and you're the fool — whether you're the country's president or a ghetto resident. Violence is bad for your health: be it from the police, the White House, or yourself. Breaking the law, makes you a target of the system. Time to rise above it all — and claim your blessing!

Learning To Love Me

Look in the mirror, look at me
What do you see, what do you need?
You say you love me and even need me
You say no one else could ever want me, just you.
You made me believe you were all I needed
Look at me, no self-esteem
No family for me to lean on
You used to beat me, and said it was my fault.

-Gina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Men who beat women are sad little cowards. They would quiver in their boots at the thought of fighting with another man, but ready to prey on the woman they supposedly love. Domestic violence is a crime. If he beats you, he'll beat your children. If he beats you, he'll beat all women he's involved with. Ask yourself if that's the type of man you want to be with — a woman beater, a total scumbag. Lose the loser.

Where I'm From

I am from where people die, kids be cryin' and I ask myself:
Why do these things have to happen to some of the people
I love and when I see kids cry that makes me feel like why
do they have to cry? Is their mother at home or is their
mother gone
I tell you people I don't like where I am from.

-Lolita, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What don't you like about where you're from? Do you dislike it enough to leave and find a new place to be from?

I Searched

I searched for fame but all I found was sorrow.
I know I'm here today, but will I be here tomorrow?
I know my fate is not an illusion
but in the game of life I fear I'm losing.
As the heat from inside becomes a burning inferno,
I take baby steps for what's on the other side I don't know.
I ask no question that cannot be answered.
The keys of the world are in the palm of my hand.
The rise of the cause is my master plan.
As my pulse fades away, I know one thing for certain.
I'm dying on the inside, so now I close the curtain.

-Joseph, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You're a natural writer Joseph. Keep that curtain open for another seventy or eighty years. The show must go on.

Yesterday

Yesterday I was at my girlfriend's house and I was talking to her about what might happen tomorrow (today), I told her I'm going back to the hall. Well I know how much she loves me and after I told her I might get locked up she started crying and said "you really need to stop all that gangbanging shhh because I don't want to find out you're doing years in the pen or get a call finding out that you're dead." With me sitting here all I hear when I'm sitting in my room is her words they really make me think maybe I should change.

I'll write more next week that's all from your boy young squeaks.

-Squeeks, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your choice. How bad do you want your freedom? How bad do you want to be with your girl? How bad do you want to be with men, confined to the system? It's your call in the end.

No Hopin' In Oakland

i'm from the land of the blocks
stunna shades and locks
city of knocks
runnas rips and rocks
the city of the glocks
the city of the lonesome
the city under siege
the city we call oakland
ain't no room for hopin'
only purple smokin'
i know it sounds sad
that's the only way of copin'
ain't no room for mopin'
it ain't no time for cryin'
when you on the block
all you see — you' people dyin'
i know it sounds bad
but that's the only way we know
the way to bleed the block
as for love we never show
tell me when to go
tell me when to stop
anywhere in oakland
you can here the pistol pop
there's no way to the top

-Eugene, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's more than sad, it's tragic. It won't change by magic. And self-medicating won't save you. Keep smoking purp' and your life will get worse. You've got to make a move for your life to improve. Move away from the street in body, mind or soul, if you want to grow whole. You know that life is getting old.

I Need To Change My Mind

What's on my mind is I want to get out of this place. I want to see my family when I get out. I'm not doing nothing that's on my mind.

What's on my mind every time I look at these walls, I just want to get out. I think about all the things I did in my past because that's on my mind. Maybe 'cause something bad was going to happen to me on the street. Is it because I was going down the wrong path? Maybe I need to change my life. That's always on my mind.

-Aladen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Reflecting on "your past" and what may have "happened," is probably why you feel the "need to change your life." What are some areas in your life that you feel you "need to change?" How serious are you and how do you make that happen? You have the power to get yourself on a different path, and that's only if you're willing. We believe "change" will allow you to stay free and be with "family." That may lessen the daily stress that weighs on your mind!

My Mind

you've taken the capacity in my mind
my biggest dream is to make time rewind
i wish i could take you out my life
it hurts even more that you called me your wife
i loved you and lost you and now hurt inside
you've cracked my heart and crumpled my pride
although i try, i think about you night and day
even though you're gone, the memories stay
please leave my mind and my heart alone
because everything you touch turns to stone

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You get it right at the end. Why would you want to do it again? Your heart is broken, you can't pretend. You can't squeeze love from a stone. Let time heal your heart and you'll know you've grown smart in life. Next time you'll get it right.

I'm From....

i'm from hustlers, bosses, and cold killers
thugs, gangsters, and dope dealers
scrapers and gold grills, white tees and nikes and dubs and slap
in the hood they' hyphy hood rats, street walkers and strippers
everybody and they' mama a fast-money tripper
ain't no love in the hood but a pocket full of money
it could take yo' life 'cause this game ain't funny
on the block all day serving all the fiends
yeah brah tryin'a stop but i'm addicted to the streets
that life pulled me in and it won't let me go
'cause now this the only life style that i know
all my loved ones in heaven waitin' to see me
watch over ya brah please please please

-Lil' Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We changed those words we warned you about, disrespectful terms for women we took out. We also took out the RIP's but kept the spirit of your please, please, please! It's time to learn mo' if that's all you know — before you get an early call to go. RIP martyrs to the street.

I Am From:

white surburbia
capes and dog food
sitting in bushes
obsession and hate
those are the things
i come from
Shiny pointy purple things
indie rock and slip-on vans
sweet-smelling smoke and
pretty girls with bad attitudes
coming from such things can make
quite an interesting person
can make
someone go insane
i know where i am from
i know where i am going
going back home
going back to
— her
that's where i'm from
that's where I'm going
to her —
to my home

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No no no — that's where you can't go! It's time to move on, the past is gone. You're the one you must return to — you're the one who must come through improved by your descent into hell. You're the one of you must come to love, in whose love you must dwell — freed at last from your self-induced, self-produced, self-seduced hell — cease to be the possession of your own obsession!

I Am From

A women who knows all
A women who I've hurt over and over
A women who will never give up on me
I know I've disappointed her
Believe me I regret everything I've done to
Hurt this women
I am from my mother.

-Malina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Disappointment is easily forgotten in the glow of new achievements. Show your mamma how much you love her through your actions and your words.

Secret

Smiling simply at the thought of you
With tears in my eyes, falling so slowly
I have so much to tell you
But still unsure of how to put it into words
Keeping secrets was never an option
Still this is too deep to tell...
It's just that I don't wanna hurt you
Make you turn judgmental.

-This Secret, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Are you sure that you will be judged? Is it something you did or something that happened to you? If it's something that happened to you, no one who loves you would ever hold it against you. But whatever it is, it's obviously eating you up inside and it sounds like it's time to get it off your chest. Everything will be all right, but bottling things up inside can be very, very painful.

Give Me A Chance

I need a vato that has my back.
I need a vato who treats me good and doesn't talk smack.
I used to think it was cool to play on other guys,
until I lost the one that meant the most.
Now I'm here alone.
I know I gave myself a bad name,
but did you know - people do change.
Don't judge me by my past. Judge me by my present.
Just look into my eyes. Believe me.
I'm not messing around. Just give me one chance.

-Paola, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're pretty sure you'll get that chance. Make the most of it. What's the plan?

Life In Money In Love

I was sixteen when I started selling drugs and it took a lot of people.
It took me three years to realize that the game ain't fair.
There is a lot of money to be made but it'll never make you rich,
nor will it let you go without paying a price.
Either you lose yourself, your freedom, your soul,
so that at the end of the road it ain't worth it.
Think a lot before you get wrapped up.
Hey don't knock my fast money.
It is the best money. Hoe money is good money too, and that's real.
But bein' locked up, money can't do shhh for me nowadays.
Money can't write you or love you.

-Girly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's true that once you're locked up, money can't help you all that much. But often, people make choices to sell drugs or hoe for money, because they feel they need to in order to survive. The problem is that what you do to survive can be dangerous or can get you locked up. It's a big problem for you youngsters in the hood.

Fight, Fight

Fight, fight against the wind
Fall down and do it again
Spread your arms out and believe in yourself
Fight, fight until you have fighting and there's no more rain
Fight, fight against the pain
Just let me know what's wrong and I'll change your frame
Share your heart and love will never do you wrong
Fight, fight because this is your fighting poem
Pray to the father of above
Fight, fight away sin so you can enter the father's love
Only he can help you through all this stress
Fight fight to get back away from the depress
Help others who's willing to help you
Fight, Fight away your soul so they'll believe you.
But keep your faith that's your pride
Open your heart and just try.
Fight fight into the light shine bright
Hold your hands up into fight into your arm get fight
It's the faith you have that's keeping you strong
I'll fight until I go wrong.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Once more, you take your place along the poetic masters: There was a great poet who once wrote "Do not go gently unto that good night/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light." You echo that grave command with this piece, and we believe that you are one poet, no matter what you decide to do, who will NOT go gently.

I'm From....

I'm from the place where people don't care
Wit' all purple smoke that stay in the air
Where people get shot for no reason at all
When the police coming down
The street if you got a chirp
Or a metro shhh yeah you gone get that call
Police taking dumb ninjas who ain't that smart to Rita
Or maybe even San Quentin
And the dice game and only one ninja gon' win
From the scrapers on dubs
And Cadillacs on twenty-four's
From white on black renegades and ninjas pimpin'
If most don't know where I'm from then you probably ain't from there
Yeah I'm from Oakland, Cal(ifornia) all up in the air.

-Nae Nae Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very good piece. Excellent descriptions. Keen eye. Broad view. Now tell us where you wish you were from. What would be different and what would be the same?

I Am From...

A family who care
That don't too many people have
A father who love me
That many people wish they have
Brought up with respect
Never child neglect
Love and care
Good mind, body, soul and hair
Born and raised
To respect my elder and be kind
Keep nasty thoughts inside my mind.

-Lil' Dizil, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're fortunate then in a lot of ways compared to others. So what happened that caused your current incarceration? Because it definitely sounds like you were raised to know better! How does your family feel right now about your situation? Are they still supportive of you? Seeing others and hearing their stories that may be less fortunate than you, does it make you value what you have a little more? How do you keep from losing value of what you have? We hope that being able to see others who are less fortunate than you, makes you value and cherish what you have!

In My Hood

I am from a dangerous block in Oakland – typically dangerous, like all of Oakland, really.

I cannot say that my block is the most deepest, scariest or most notorious block in all of Oakland, but I can say that we can make something out of nothing and most importantly have fun with whatever we are doing.

Around my block there are about four different liquor stores, all within a three block span, but there is also more community businesses around, like a washing center for the neighborhood and a taco restaurant.

But like I said we have a lot of fun with or without the use of drugs.

-TheoryOne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a nice tribute to your neighborhood, with all that it needs and all that it has. "Making something out of nothing" is how some of the greatest treasures came about: blues, hip hop, soccer champions, poetry, and more. It's a trip that there are more liquor stores than washing centers – and sad too. What else can you say about your block, and about what you want to see it become?

One Shot Can End Yo' Whole Life

One shot can end yo' whole life,

So you better think twice

Or you better live it right

Every day is a fight

Got to struggle to survive

I'm seeing kids die

And I seen mama's cry

And ain't no name on them bullets

When they come flying by,

So young ninjas die out here

On the battlefield,

So while you still got a chance,

Ask God for forgiveness

And get yourself saved

Before you get killed,

Or before you get fifty years to life

You still got a chance to live yo' life right.

-Jesus Coleone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're 100% on point on everything you mention about gunplay. We regret that you have seen all the things you have soon. However, don't allow these things to get the best of you. Are you still on the battlefield you speak of? If you are, then you aren't following what you are preaching. You already know what the results are for being out there, so get out while you still can before you find yourself with your mother sooner rather than later. Don't take it the wrong way; we're not trying to be cold, but we're just letting you know what will happen to you if you continue going down the path you're currently in. Shhh, you know the results. Jesus Coleone keep writing and teaching, use your gifts to save lives!

My Block

i am from a place
where people die
just walking down the street
where i am from
if you ain't solid
ninja' will run all over
like the track field
i'm from a place
where even if you not in school
you will be put to a test
and if you caught slipping
you will be put to rest

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The test you need to pass, the only test that will really save your ass, is that take home quiz where you ask yourself, "Why I got to live like this?" Get solid with yourself before the system puts you on a shelf. It's not about being hard but being smart. Make a new start. You've got the heart!

Without Borders

If there was no borders,
then I would probably be traveling
all over the world,
instead of being locked up.
I would have a lot of bread,
hustling.

I would go and move to Puerto Rico
if there was no damn borders.

-Queen Bee, Marin

From The Beat: Tell us why Puerto Rico? Why would you have to hustle to travel? Plenty of young people find work all over the world in order to live in different places. Even if the work is temporary, such as office, restaurant or kitchen, construction jobs, etc., it can keep you fed and get you an inexpensive place to sleep and some small money so you can move on when you're ready.

A Place Called Home

i am from the place where every thing is big
a place tom landry had his first coaching gig
a place where there are no mountains at all
but also a place where it's the biggest state of all
my heart has stayed there and one day i'll come
back to a place called mission, texas, that's where i'm from
i'll bring back things that my heart will need
my skateboard and my girl, then my life will proceed

-Young Texan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like your heart is with your skateboard and your girl, even if Texas is a big part of your world. For your life to proceed, tell yourself to change your deeds — keep your board and your girl, but change the way you twist and twirl. Leave trouble behind and find a satisfied mind.

Fed Up

Doomed

It seems like I've been doomed since elementary
Destined to be another number in the penitentiary
They wanna see me locked up for half a century
But it's up to me to keep my head up
Because the whole judicial system got me fed up
I'm gettin' dogged like I piss wit' one leg up
But I'm gonna face this shhh with my head up
Got potnas dyin' while I'm in the system
Can't go to their funerals and tell 'em I miss 'em
'Cause I'm stuck in the Hall, listenin' to Wisham

-Fat Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If the system is all about turning names into numbers, here you use the strength of your mind to fight to keep your name, to keep your humanity, even in the face of all the weight crushing down. Yes, it's up to you to hold your head up, the way you do in this poem, with simple eloquence and emotion, but even more, it's up to you to keep your voice strong, strong enough to make sure it's understood that no matter what the system does, you are person, not a number. So long as you keep writing powerful rhymes like this, you will always be a name, not a number.

I'm.....

I'm a gang banger from juvenile hall
I'm an original detainee, player.
I'm a good kid,
I know I'm a good kid. I just do wrong things.
Like being a follower instead of a leader.
I have a nappy fro. It's hard to pick it.
So that's why I say nappy fro.
I need some water.

-Erin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think good kids choose to do the wrong things for themselves? We believe one hundred percent that actions don't define a person, but we also believe in taking responsibility for ones actions and putting that goodness to work for you.

I Am From...

The streets of Oakland.

Where they say a trouble hood or block.

Where every youngsta get killed that's under twenty-one.

They say it's God's gift for yo' life, but how I see it we living in hell.

A youngsta who caught up in so much bull you can't even see yo' older brother, who got wacked in the street life. Wondering would my life be next in the street life. Sometimes I wish I could run away and never come back.

-Gaeland, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It must be very troubling and stressful to live that "street life." Especially with what happened to your brother and we're sure others you know. Do you honestly believe that "every youngsta will get killed that's under 21?" It may have happened to some of the young people you know, but do you have to become of those casualties/statistics? It sounds like you don't want to be! So are you willing to do what's right and what that will take? There's nothing wrong with preserving your life and future. And we hope you give yourself that chance!

I'll Keep My Faith

A sweet of wind slammin' against the walls of my gate
But I'll keep on believin' in myself and keeping my faith

Trees bounce from side to side like a ball

Birds talks to me like an inside call

But I'll keep my faith

I'll keep my faith like the ocean keeps its waves

My faith will ride wit' me into my end of days

Confused by the judgement of my peers

But I'll keep my faith even if I drop tears.

Sit and watch my faith build into your eyes

I been put down and all I can do is try

Most people try to make my life a downfall

But I'll keep my faith and for ever stand away from you all.

Only you can keep you faith up high

People try to put you down just let them keep passin' by

Believe in trust and yourself to do whatever you dream

Just keep your faith and you'll have something.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This isn't just a poem, it's an anthem - a song for anyone who has ever been put down to remember... if you believe these words, in your heart, fundamentally, down deep, no matter what kinds of petty struggles take place in the Hall, no matter what the judge says, no matter what the DA says, then you can ride that faith like a wind that carries you home.

I Am From

Money, gold, treasure,

I am from

Soil, trees, air

I am from

Muscle, strength, color

I am from

Respect, mind, thoughts

I am from

Family, friends, associates

I am from,

Me, myself, and I.

-Tweezy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent! You are from many things and you know how to recognize it. Keep thinking not just about where you're from, but where you're going.

Camp Is Better Than The Hall

What it do Beat, this ya' boy Lil' Tae, I finally got to Camp Sweeney.

I been waiting for a long time, and I'm finally here. Camp is way better than Juvenile Hall, We go on field trips, and outings. We get more rec time, and freedom. It's better than a lot of other places, and we always outside. It's a lot of things we can do up here -- The judge said camp would be a good program for me. I been here for seven days, I was in The Hall for a month and two days altogether. I been locked up for ninety days, and I get my H-V on the 27th.

I'm going to make sure I finish this program.

-Andante, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We made this a standout so other Beat readers can see what you have to say and you can give some of them hope, that there is hope waiting for them up the hill. Field trips, freedom, fresh air, all things that can help you find a kind of peace inside and be stronger when you get back on the outs. We hope someone reads this and feels encouraged.

My Plan To Stay Out

My plan to staying out is to first obtain my GED, my California ID and job. I know I have the intelligence to do so.

In the past I made simple mistakes because of the life I was living and the environment I lived in. I felt that life would never get any better than what it was. But as I mature I seem to realize is that life is what you make it out to be.

So I'm going to make my life out to be a free and successful young man, who is always going to be there for his child or children. I'm going to make sure my daughter gets the attention, parenting and education she needs. And the more I keep myself bein' positively busy the less I'll be negatively in trouble and that's how I'm going to stay out of jail.

-Lamarr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every once in a while we read a piece in here about someone saying he's going to change in his life, and there's something about his pride that shows through, that tells us he could really do it. You write this with confidence, the confidence of a young man who has started to find his way. Maybe because your words show that you have a real hope for yourself, not just a desire. We are glad to hear you have a plan too. Keep writing as you refine and break down that plan, keep all our readers posted on what you're doing and what you're going through.

What Have I Accomplished?

Tomorrow is the day I turn seventeen, and as I look back on my life, it's such a blur. If you really think about it, most people only live to eighty, more or less. That means I lived through quarter of my life. It's such a shame because I'm still lost and I think of what I accomplished -- nothing.

My mom worked hard her whole life for nothing, because look at what I become. Growing up people always told me I wouldn't become nothing. I'd tell them that I'd get a good job, make money and such, but inside I always feared that I will only live up to their expectations.

Being in this situation has made me think about my adolescent days and wish I could just go back in time and just go back in time and that's

what most people think of too, but I start to really think about it.

If our days of adolescence was so perfect, why go back and change it

Why do we wanna live such a memory?

-Tbone, 150 Crew

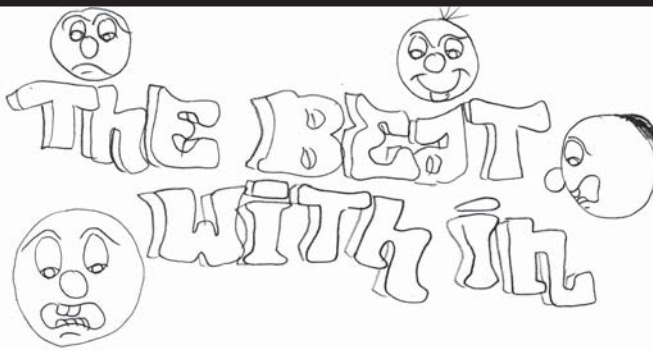
From The Beat: "People told me I wouldn't become nothin'" Our eyes popped in disbelief to think you might agree with them, when everything you write, including this piece, shows that you've not only become something and somebody, but that you've become something special: Talented, thoughtful, brave enough to write his most painful memories down on paper, and wise beyond his years. Do any of these things count as an accomplishment in your mind? Can you really say that you've accomplished "nothing?"... Yes, you're in jail now, and it must seem like a great fall -- but you have an entire future ahead of you. You're not looking at life in jail. And the time you are looking at, well to us that looks like time to keep reading, to keep writing, to keep learning, so that when you get out, you can prove everyone wrong. As for changing the past...Your past is your best teacher. Are you willing to be its student?

I Am From...

I am from a place with gangs astray
The heart of the bay
'Cause here I'm born
The boy without it I'm torn
Where people grow to be killas
A place known for drug dealers
A place where I find peace
Where my momma wants me least
And causes her grief not mention
I grew up with a mission
Not to live with the tension of all this strife
Contradicting my life
I choose to make my life soar
To the top without a spot
On my own from day
I did my business without a gun,
So people acting
When they live life packin'
I'm smackin' off two pills feeling myself
What it do
Selling pills actin' a fool
Gotta stop nothing else to pop
Now running from cops
This ain't my vision of the top.
Everyone's so cruel
To make me think to trade in school
For drugs and money to be cool
I'm done with it get off me
I'm still winning, I'm out tomorrow
No more pain and sorrow.

-Dominic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Pain and sorrow" is a part of life that touches everyone. However, believe it or not, we choose how much of it we feel by the way we live. We'd like to believe that your "momma" has your best interest at heart? What do you think? What does your "vision of the top" look like? Surely it has mom's in it happy? How do you get to the top and avoid getting sidetracked from your goal, because of incarceration? Did you mean you're trading in that lifestyle for "school," or "school" for that lifestyle? You may be getting "out tomorrow" but are you "winning" long term or short term?



Where I'm From

I am from a place where love ain't seen
I'm from a place where black people is mean
I'm from a place where we all get down
I'm from a place that's deep in the town
I'm from a place that's all about money
I'm from a place that don't like outside company
I'm from a place where dudes just wanna bump me
I'm from a place where we use ninjas just for money
I'm from a block that's called the....

-Rina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very, very well written piece. We want to know more, to read more. Can you go on, or can you write about the place you wish you were from? How would it be different, how would it be the same?

When I Wake Up...

When I wake up in my cell, all I see is how messed up my life got. My family don't trust me, my girl mad at me, and my potnas don't care about nothing.

When I wake up, all I think about is how I got here? What I did and why I did it? If I wouldn't have listen to my potnas, I wouldn't even be here. I would have been with my girl at the movies or something.

When I wake up, I think about how my life will change when I get out? How my life will be with my girl, and how things will change when I have my own family?

When I get out I'm a be a new me. Change my life, stop doing drugs, get new potnas, or something.

-Thy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For your sake, we hope what you're saying is true! We believe if you do what it takes to become a "new" you, your "family" will begin to "trust you" again, and maybe your "girl" won't be "mad" at you anymore. If your "potnas don't care about nothing", then why are they your "potnas"? Sounds like you have a decision to make that will affect your future and real happiness. So please choose wisely!

It's Me?

I'm finding myself spending time inside a small cell
This is a cage which they call jail
My anger is building about the walls
Caged in a cell that's named Juvenile Hall
Is this a place where I'm away from home
Instead of bein 'with my family I'm finding myself alone
I'm stressed out by the system's games.
They wanna say something but don't know names
Growin' up here was nothin' but a joke
Send more time with them than your own folks
I'm at the edge where I'm about to flip
I can't get mad 'cause I did the crime so why trip?
Only words come to mind is think before you act
Really if you don't wanna live here with these cats
Only person I got is myself
I'll stand on my ground by myself until there's nothing left
It's time to open my eyes and see the things good
Travel to different places instead of hood to hood.
My life is like a bag full of gold.
I'm speakin' my mind so please don't mind me
Only thing we got is ourself
Open y'all eye because this is real it's not no test
Me I'ma do my time ten years and don't think 'bout my past
Been to CYA, I'm makin' this my last.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Different places instead of hood to hood." Reading this line was very inspiring, because the more you see, the more you will have to set your own imagination on fire. You write so many vivid poems about the street, the block, your girl, your past, your brother - and now imagine the kind of poetry you could write about your life after traveling the world wide. What would a Lil Papa poem look like after he described some of these things: holding your boy up to get a better view of the streets of the Bronx, where hip-hop was invented, or a boat in the water in Italy, getting ready for some real Italian pizza? Or on a desert plain in Africa, under a hot baleful son. Your future is as big as you're willing to imagine it!

What I Think About

When I think about my mom
I go crazy
'Cause she is all I got left
I lost my dad
Man, it hurts very much
So I live for him every day
You know?

- Weather Man LCRES

From The Beat: Do you mean you try to live a good life for your dad because he's gone and can't live his own life? How do you help your mom? How old were you when your dad left? How are you like him? Not like him? What was his personality like?

I Am From

I am from white T's, Nikes, jeans and a fitted hat,
I am from a concrete jungle, hide-and-seeks,
And a house with roaches and rats,
I am from red, white, and green with a bird in a middle
I am from rice, beans, steak, Starburst and Skittles.
I am from Catholics in the name of the Father, the son & and the Holy Spirit,
I am from a bloodline with hustle that's out there trying to get it
I am from musical notes running through my veins,
I am from good and bad, pleasure and pain
I am from smoking marijuana and getting high
I am from family, love, and respect that'll never die to keep me alive

-Young Cutt-E

From The Beat: We always worry about publishing colors, but since your wonderful poem contains both "blue" and "red" and their contexts, we found nothing objectionable. We hope you can add a few things to your list, like school and education because we think that would make you a more well rounded person. Otherwise, very well put Young Cutt!

Chicano

I am from neither here or there,
I am not from anywhere,
I have many names,
Some of them put me to shame,
To the American I am a beaner,
To the Mexican I am a gringo,
The American says I am not Mexican enough,
The Mexican says I am not Mexican enough,
What am I then?
I am a Chicano
And I've got the best of both cultures,
I don't care if I'm not Mexican,
I don't care if I'm not American,
Why? Because I am a Chicano,
Which means I am not from here or there,
I am not from anywhere.

-Juan

From The Beat: Juan, thank you for sharing this wonderful piece with us and the your peers. It takes courage and determination to write a piece like this and stand up to read it out loud to the class. And it doesn't matter what people say, as long as you know who you are inside and outside, that is all it matters. And you are right, you do have the best of both sides. So take advantage of it! You may be neither this nor that, but to us you are exactly what we are looking for: a fine poet and Beat writer!

What's On My Mind

What's on my mind is that nobody can tell me about what I do or the life I live. Everybody looks like it's one of the worst things in the world, but don't speak up on what I do unless you walked in my shoes, 'cause I can tell you one thing; my life is good.

What I do is what I do and can't nobody look down on me. I live my life right and I'm happy the way I am. And I'm gonna tell you one thing, I'm going to have a future and nobody can look at me otherwise. And I bet you this: I know I'ma eat and I'm never gonna go homeless and I know that. I take care of myself so don't tell me about my life style until you walk a day in my shoes.

-Damare

From The Beat: Sure, we won't talk about your lifestyle or the way you live, but let's talk about the life you are living right now, this very moment in the hall. You like waking up every morning and being told when to eat, sleep, use the restroom, or even shower? You like wearing underwear that the man next to you might have worn yesterday? If this is what you like and if you are happy with this, then we have nothing to say. But if you don't like living under the system, then hey, take a good look at the way you were living when you were in the free world. You're right, we haven't walked in your shoes, but we have walked in Bob Barkers, and we know everyone hates that. So choose your path carefully because continuing to do the things that led you here can only lead you here again...

First Thing On My Mind

The first thing on my is... that it's too early and we need five more hours to sleep. And when I'm thinking all that I end up being mad because I'm so tired and want to keep sleeping. That's what's the first thing that goes through my head.

-Jose

From The Beat: We agree. It just seems like we can never get enough sleep. Will it be easier for you to sleep when you're back in your own bed?

My Girl

Now let me tell you 'bout my type of girl, she down till the end,
Ups and downs, smiles and frowns, through the thick and thin,
Always down for the lovin' when we touchin' and cuttin',
She ma only back bone when I'm hustlin' and thuggin',
Yeah, I play my cards right and I'm choosin' a Queen,
No jokers, no jacks, now she got her a King,
By the name of Young Cutt E, straight cutthroat and savage,
And she'll stick to ya boy like a grilled cheese sandwich,
Messed up a couple times but never tear us apart,
She'll just keep her mouth closed and show me love from the heart,
She my Bonnie, I'm her Clyde,
She down to ride, keep her right by my side,
Got me held behind bars and she got me on bail
She the only one I trust because I know she won't fail,
Yeah, she my best friend and my hyphy wifey,
Big thang, diamonds, and she 'bout it like me

-Yung Cutt-E

From The Beat: What is a King without a Kingdom? And how is a Queen supposed to live with the King in her heart when gives away his freedom and is taken from her? She may not fail you, but you have definitely failed her by leaving her alone when she didn't need words of love, she needed you! If you were truly playing your cards right, you wouldn't be stuck inside writing to someone you should be with.

Music Motivates Me

Today was a regular day, one like any other, while everything was running smooth as was expected. It was some time after three when the news began to show on TV, which at first I had ignored up until I realized they were speaking about "violence" and how the music we listened to has effects on us. This made me think of The Beat and some of the beauties of art.

So then I began thinking my about my life. And I thought that the choices I made gave me this life of crime only causing me to do time. Black or White, Asians or brown, red or blue, it didn't make no sense. These are all reasons that make us different. Cities we're from, our age, the shapes of our bodies, and the names we're called make us special to someone. But how does life imitate art (music)? Music soothes my thoughts, sometimes calm our minds. Often it occupies our time it keeps us busy.

To some it's motivation, a "hustle" to some, a 9-5 to others. Music is beautiful art. It's part of everyday life. Its rhythm and melodies are all part of the flow. Music is what we all have in common! It could be sacred or rap, the dance could be ballet or tap. The joy music brings to others can be anyone of these things to narrow the big generational gap. In this case, poetry or rap even combined keeps this "Beat" alive. It's the expression of our life's struggles and or pleasures even feelings of all kinds. These are some of the beauties of music.

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: Damn this is good, Young Bugs. The birth of The Beat was due to the death of Tupac Shakur, who rocked the music world and the lives of the young and old. But his music is not the only such music to reach into the soul — a popular song can do it, a classical symphony can do it, even opera can do it! Music is art, and art is beautiful. For some, other forms of art are even more powerful than music, but for us, we agree with you that music is very special. Thank you for this piece. We hope to see more writings of this quality from you in the future. It's music to our ears...

What's On My Mind

What's on my mind is nothing but my time. What I'm worried about is waiting to get out. What's on my mind is what am I gonna do so I won't get out and act a fool! What's on my mind is my man, I miss him so and how much I need him to help me grow. What's on my mind is how strong I think I am and now I gonna be all that I can!

-M&Ms

From The Beat: Don't think you are strong, know you are strong. And you can be all you can be as long as you put your mind to it. (And you don't really NEED "him" to grow. It might b nice to have that kind of support, but you are complete within yourself.) If you really worried about getting out and what you are going to do to keep yourself out, our advice is to make a list of goals within a certain amount of time. Each time you complete one set of goals, make some new ones. You'll be amazed at what you can achieve.

Babies On The Way

I've got babies on the way,
 twins to be exact. A boy and a girl.
 I've got to make a change,
 no more blowin' 'dro, drinkin' 40s
 kickin' it wit' my patnas.
 It's not about me anymore,
 it's about these two defenseless lives
 that I'm bringing into this world.
 I maybe just seventeen and still a baby myself,
 I've got to give my kids the life I never had.
 I've got to do the best that I can
 'cause I'm a mama now and I've got to change.

-Lukee Kharmz

From The Beat: You're right, it's not about you now. But you're also wrong, because it is still about you, too. Unless you respect yourself by giving up the things that lead to you coming here, then you can't be the responsible mother you know you must be. So, it's really about you and your twins. If you truly honor and love yourself, and do nothing to bring you down, then you will be honoring and loving your children by always being with them to guide them through the rough spots. You must be — and are — more responsibility now then you've ever been before.

You Talk About

You talk about the streets
 Like it's the thing to do
 You talk about drug deals and dealers
 Pimps and prostitutes
 Gang rivalry
 Murders and unwanted deaths
 You don't talk about homeless teens
 Just tryin' to find their way
 You don't talk about
 Eatin' one meal a day
 Or showerin' when you can
 You don't talk about
 Roughin' it out
 But you really haven't
 You always had a place to go
 Have you slept in parks
 On benches
 No, you've got warm beds
 To go home to
 You think you know
 But you don't
 All you do is
 Talk about it

-Lukee Kharmz

From The Beat: We don't know who you are addressing in this poem, but if the person always had a place to go, you should be thankful for that — even if you had to struggle to find a place to sleep. Now that you've told us what this person talks about, tell us what you talk about, and what's important in your life.

I Am From

I am from the south
 Born and raised in Daly City
 I am from too many heart aches and
 too much hope
 I am from the evil hands of C.P.S
 Different homes and schools
 I am from hot and cold
 Humidity and drought
 I am from a tiny town where
 everyone knows each other
 I am from brits and y'all
 What it do's and what's goods
 I am from a broken family
 Asians and whites
 I am from a southern gentleman
 and an Asian beauty
 I am from proud and joy
 Love and happiness
 I am from sadness and
 disappointments
 I am from love between two people
 I am from ribs, potatoes salad and
 kool-aid
 I am from real ghettos and steppin'
 teams
 I am from muni, Sam Trans buses
 and BART
 I am from the East Coast and West
 Coast
 I'm Coastal

-Lukee Kharmz

From The Beat: We really like this poem, LK. We'd love you to take one or more parts of the ingredients that make you who you are and write a lot more about it. For example, that "southern gentleman" and "Asian beauty" make us want to know a whole lot more...

Rehabilitated

Ever since I came here, I was promised I wouldn't be here long,
 Boy was that the same old song. I'm always in my room thinking of a hard
 ache, even future gloom. I want to be set free but it seems that freedom doesn't
 want me.

Now look at me, I'm locked up. This isn't the happiest I ever been in my life,
 but hey, what can I say? I was in so much danger in that "free world," constantly
 watching my back, sellin' drugs to my own people. Damn! My own people!

I thank God now that I'm in juvenile hall because my body would have been
 outlined with chalk and plastic wrapped like a candy bar. Now that I'm learning
 my mind is purified, no more smoking, and popping pills. That's the reason
 my mind was being fried. My mind is stronger now. I really think I'm going to
 succeed in this world. You'll see!

-Clarence

From The Beat: Clarence, we know you are going to succeed in this world because you know it to. Don't think. Have your mind set on it. Tell yourself you are going to succeed and you are going to be somebody. There's no question that you have the talent. You can overcome the obstacles still in your path; you have overcome many.

I thank God now that I'm in juvenile hall because my body
 would have been outlined with chalk and plastic wrapped
 like a candy bar.

My Worries

What's up with it Beat? It's ya boy from Daly City. This my first time writing, but I felt like I had to write about the
 struggles in my life. So I've been thinking about my mom and my family too, and I hope she is makin' it wit'out
 me right now. If I had a chance to say sorry for all the time I ran from the house and show up like two weeks later
 and never thought that she would worry about me also making her cry for the things I've done in the past.

So I'm very sorry and I love my mom! Well, I got love for da homies out there too and do what y'all got to do
 and keep yo' heads up! Well, also my girl is here you know who you are and I hope your court will go fine, you
 little stubborn head. Well, I've been wit' her since Valentines Day but should have been wit' her in the seventh
 grade years ago. I got love for you and be good!

Well, my big worry is if my mom gets too sick and ends up in the hospital. I've been making her cry for too
 long now and now I have to change things for her, like go to school and show up at the house every day and not
 go skip and drink like in the past and respect her. But I'ma get out in June and that's gonna give me time to get
 a plan ready! Peace!

-Lil' Casper

From The Beat: Lil' Casper, we're glad you decided to write and share with us your thoughts. Let us tell you something: There are no parents out there that want to be separated from their child. In your piece, we know you love your mother, but the love you still have for your homies is bound to cause you to have to choose between which love comes first. We know your homies are going to want you to do things that could lead back here, away from your mother. And we know your mother wants just one thing from you, and that is you at home with her. So who will you give what they want? If you think you can satisfy both, you'll only tear yourself (and your family) apart.

Always On My Mind

As I start to lay down and close my eyes,
 A thousand things pop into my mind.
 I always fall asleep thinking about my past
 Wishing that I could go back and make every
 moment last.
 Thinking 'bout my best friend who passed,
 Wishing that I could bring him back.
 Looking back at how happy I used to be,
 Now thinking damn what happened to me
 I'm always thinkin' 'bout people who care
 Hoping that they will always be there.
 Thinkin' 'bout my past sometimes makes me sad,
 But then again it makes me glad
 So when I'm in my room and I start to get sad,
 I just lay down close my eyes and think about my
 past

And that's when I know that it's going to last

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: Let bygones be bygones. Look towards the future and tell us what your brown eyes see. Your future waits for you. You can't turn back the hands of time, but you can lay the path to a better life.

What's On My Mind

What's on my mind the first thought I wake up
 thinking about is thinking what my bro tries to
 tell me when he tries to grab me by my hands.
 Sometimes I just think he just wants me by his
 side. Well, actually I always wake up thinking
 about that.

-Tiny

From The Beat: Nice to have you back in The Beat, Tiny. We've missed seeing your work!

I'm Doing Time

I'm doing time. I'm in this hall doing hard times I'm all stood up pinned up on the main line. I'm just going crazy. Every day and every night these people just got me crazy, putting more changes against me and the shhh ain't right. I committed a crime facing four years in the Y. Damn!

For all, keep your head up and don't lose your mind.

-Tiny

From The Beat: Good advice, Tiny. Keep your head up and don't lose your mind!

Starting Fresh

What's up Beat? Well, just writing to let you guys know I'm heella gonna miss you guys and most of all your Beats. The Beats really helped me in a lot of ways. It got me to realize a lot of things and it got me to become a stronger person 'cause of all my feelings I put in this piece of paper. I don't want to say good-bye, but I guess it will be a fresh new start.

I'm leaving to a group home at Colorado for at least one year. And I'm gonna be off probation, so hopefully I won't have to come back. I'm so happy 'cause it just like a new life. Yeah, I know I'm gonna be far away from my loved ones, but what keeps me strong is knowing they will always be there and knowing I will get to see them again.

But yeah Beat, hopefully I leave soon to start my fresh new life. I'm really gonna miss the Beat. I'll try to keep in touch. Much love and respect.

-Tiny

From The Beat: We are going to miss you too, Tiny — but only if you don't write to us and tell us how things are. If you write, we will publish you in the back of the big Beat (and we'll send it to your family if you give us the address). You will always be a part of The Beat family wherever you are. We wish and hope nothing but the best for you. Don't just TRY to keep in touch, DO keep in touch. You're leaving with the right attitude, and we know you can get a lot out of this new start, and come back a stronger person for it. We won't forget you. Don't forget us.

I Am From

I am from a small town, Cemetery
Where people die and get buried

I'm from a family that taught me respect and pride,
Where working hard striving is something I'll never hide,
Football, basketball, and rugby, doing all this made my family love me

And now I'm locked up and I'm ready to shout, to see my family again,

I'll do anything to get out

I'm from a family that always go to church

And posted on the block always pushing work

I'm from a family that don't follow da rule
Fighting people that wanna bang, and do what they wanna do

But I can't do nothing like that to make my family proud,
'Cause I'm over here in Hillcrest Juvenile hall on lock down

-Check

From The Beat: You show your family this, and they will be very proud to see the maturity in you right now. To know that their son is about to change, and going on the right route, will make them very proud. You say you'll do anything to get out, but what we want to know is what you will be doing (or not doing) to stay out.

Baby, Don't Leave My Side

Baby boy don't cry, I'll stick by your side. I ain't like those other females that left you torn apart. I really care for you and want the best, so please daddy don't make me cry. I want you to know I will always be here for you in good and bad times. I know I ain't gonna be by your side for a long time, but please baby boy tell me you will be okay and that you won't be messed up in all that gang shhh and all them wanna be homies that only are gonna leave you with a emptiness that you gonna regret.

Please daddy in this two years I'm gonna be gone, let me know that you gonna be okay. I'm saying all this 'cause deep inside is all the love I have for you, so please don't keep me with this harm. Always and forever. Keep your head up.

-Tiny

From The Beat: Well, Tiny, like we say, we really don't like publishing these love letters because they are just personal notes, not what The Beat is for. We put this one in, though, because we took out the one that reads like a threat to whatever "home girl" stole your ex man... That's totally inappropriate.

You Cheated

You cheated, you lied, you said that you loved me. What can I do to make you understand? Your fake love just torn my heart apart. Why did you have to hurt me this bad?

Every night I pray to God to whip all the tears you made me cry. Baby boy, I believed all your words you had told me. I really had my trust on you, but know you just played with my heart. I thought you was the right guy, but I guess this time love really played me 'cause now I'm just turn apart.

-Tiny

From The Beat: Love is a strange thing. We don't think anyone will ever truly understand its power. Love can make us blind to the things around us, and love can make us do things that we thought we would never do. Love can be wonderful, but at the same time, it can be very, very hurtful. We've all gone through it, though, because it's part of growing up. The nice thing about a broken heart is that it mends very fast when the next love comes along.

Perdon Mom

Perdoname por todo lo que he hecho mal, y lo más importante, por hacerte sufrir, por caer preso, pero te prometo que una vez que salga de aquí I'll make it up for you. Te voy a obedecer.

From The Beat: Esperamos que sepas cumplir tu promesa. Si la rompe, va a ser más doloroso para ella. Te lo aseguramos. Es hora de hacer llorar a tu madre, pero de alegría.

Sorry Mom

Forgive me for all the bad things that I have done, and the most important, for making you suffer, for getting locked up, but I promise you that once I get out of here, I'll make it up to you. I am going to obey you.

-Fabian

From The Beat: We hope that you know to fulfill your promise. If you break it, it is going to be more painful for her, we guarantee you. It is time for you to stop making your mother cry tears of pain, but rather of joy.

Your Own World

Drugs? Drugs, just 'cause you nothing but harm and regrets. It destroys your life and makes you live in your own world and makes your loved ones nothing but sadness to see you living in your own world. Drugs makes you think different and not carrying about you or anything else. The only thing you're worried about is trying it again.

Man, I regret those times I dizzed and all those times I smoked pocky and blunts. It just got me nowhere but harm. Now I sit and thank God for putting me here 'cause really right now I will be dead. I used to think negative like I won't make it without drugs. But now I know it's just chemicals trying to kill your life.

But just remember drugs always end you in a bad place like my brother RIP. Just for one hit he got shot. That's why I got so much hate for drugs. If you really think about it, you never end up in a good place. Think of all the things it's causing you. I'm young, but I had a lot of experience with drugs and I had a lot of my loved ones dead for drugs. So just keep all this in mind.

-Tiny

From The Beat: Tiny, thank you for sharing with us your thoughts on drugs and also your experience. This is what we mean when we say The Beat is supposed to teach something, and this teaches plenty! We're sure many readers will appreciate your advice, and maybe you will save someone from the terrible tragedy that your brother suffered. It's good to have you back in The Beat.

I Am From

I am from the slums of the ghetto,
Where everyone hungry for more dinero,

I am from kai puaka

When you hungry you eat

Never starve never sleep

I am from da town

Not from the sorry place

But where cats get dough

Get money and get some mo'

Don't stop 'till you out the doo'

I am from a group of kings

Bale down to our knees

I am trust and respect

You either get wit' us or you're against us

I am from living lovely

Where beezee chase me like money

But at the end of the day I just about

getting money

-Vailea

From The Beat: You are from a place where there are cop chases, where people die at way too young ages, parents crying because their kids are out there dying, all for the wrong reasons, and getting locked up in all the year's seasons, where people run looking over their shoulders, putting obstacles in their path as big as boulders. We hoped you would take the challenge to teach what makes you, you. Instead you gave us this oh-so-familiar brew. If beezies are chasing you "like money," they must be like bees without honey... There's one thing we know for sure, for your sake we hope you mature.

Island Of Beauty

I am from the Island of beauty

Where the fruits are fruity

I am from the land of dread heads

Where my mom once wed

I am from where the beaches have clear water

Where I first met my father

I am from Jamaica

-James

From The Beat: James, it's a shame you only wrote so little about this place of beauty. We know you could have written more, put in more vivid details of this place called Jamaica so we could get a clear picture. You have to paint a word picture that takes the place of a photograph. .

Unfinished Puzzle

The pieces that are missin' from my puzzle are family, my little brother, and money. (I have none of it). I'm in debt. I owe the institution, so that would be a great puzzle piece to gain. Another is the answer to why my ex would hit me, cheat, lie, then put blame on me, when I loved him all the way.

-Angelita

From The Beat: When any man can raise his hands against a woman, that is a sign of cowardice, an immature boy raised to disrespect females and, therefore, to have no respect for himself, either. For us, it would never take more than once time to leave a "lover" to hit us, or to understand that any boy who hits a girl needs to be resocialized. Love must be based on mutual respect, and there can be no respect from an abuser, nor can there be self-respect from someone who allows herself to be abused. We're sorry you had this unfortunate experience, and we're even sorrier that a large number of boys (and men) fall into the category of having no respect. You deserve a loving relationship. Everyone deserves someone that cares for and loves them.

Yo Trate De Cambiar

Una vez trate de cambiar mi vida, pero no pude porque no supe como empezar. Lo que me llebo a cambiar mi vida fue cuando mataron a mi primo y porque mi familia me decia que yo cambiara. Ahora lo que me detiene a cambiar mi vida es mi barrio y mis homies.

Aveces me gusta la vida que llebo por todos los desmadres que hago con todos los homies, pero lo malo es que con esta vida que llebo, puedo ver como pierden la vida varios homies.

From The Beat: Es dificil pero poco a poco se puede hacerlo. No te detengas. Si tu corazón desea ser otra persona, sigue a tu corazón que es lo más importante que todo. Ahorita estas pasando en la etapa en la cual tienes que dejar la vida que llebas o seguirla y terminar tu vida en mal estado. Nosotros hemos conocidos muchas personas que han estado en tu situaciones, es más aquí trabajan unos cuantos de ellos, y ellos han salido adelante. Todo es posible en esta vida cuando se quiere de corazón. Es tu vida, no la de ellos. Piensa en lo tuyo y deja vivir la de ellos.

I Tried To Change

One time, I tried to change my life, but I wasn't able to because I didn't know how to start. What led me to change my life was when they killed my cousin and because my family would tell me to change. Now what is holding me back from changing my life is my 'hood and my homies.

Sometimes I like the life that I lead because of all the crazy things I do with all the homies. But the bad thing is that with this life that I lead, I can see how so many homies lose their lives.

-Pelón

From The Beat: It's difficult, but little by little, you can do it. Don't hold yourself back. If your heart longs to be another person, follow your heart, which is the most important thing above everything else. Right now, you're going through a phase in which you have to leave the life that you lead or continue it and finish your life in a bad state of being. We have met many people who have been in your situation, and some of these people have even worked for us, and they have come out striving forward. Everything is possible in this life when one longs for it with all one's heart. It's your life; not theirs. Think about what's best for you and let others live their lives.

A Poem From My Heart

Don't leave me baby, stay with me tonight.

Don't leave me babe you're my whole in the life.

We can work this out all right!

Just sleep by my side and hold me tight all through the night

I don't wanna fight in my darkness

You are my light,

Don't be my darkness tonight all right?

It breaks my heart to hear you tell me to shut up or call me names,

Why the games, don't you feel shame?

Why hit me? Don't you love me?

Put no one above me? So why hurt me so bad, not only make me sad but hit me

What did I do, all I ever did was love you, please you,

Treat you like my king, my everything,

Because that's who you are, my love, my life, my world, my king, my everything

My every reason for living

There is nothing I wouldn't do to spend my life with you

I gave my all to you, and this is what you do,

I promised that I would never lie, and never did I even try.

Thinking and dreaming about you got me going crazy,

And I'm dyin' inside 'cause I know I don't want no one else ever but you

And I think you feel the same way too

But you're anger got the best of you

After such a long relationship why lose me?

I'm a pretty, faithful, true loving girl and I got everything else a guy would want in a

girl

And I'm by your side and through all the yells, names, hits, lies,

That's where you hide,

The real you, the one who was true.

And when you hit me that's when I died.

Then I turned myself in and cried and cried,

Didn't eat sleep, move, talk or anything,

All I could say is why?

God! Why?!

All I could do was think of you, our good times and the love I'm missing out on now,

We had such a great love,

Then you told me to get out for reals,

And all I could do was listen to you

I loved your family too, I got so attached!

And it was going so well and now it's all gone just like that, and I'm so far from you

I wake up every morning to turn around and put my arm on your chest

And my head on your shoulders to say good morning.

Mi amor but all I got was a wall.

I can't just stop loving you,

Even though I need to, and it's the best thing to do so I won't get hit or hurt by you.

-Angel

From The Beat: Kings don't hit women! Period! And women who respect themselves don't allow themselves to be hit. Period. So we think you should drop this loser like a hot potato, and start focusing on loving yourself. When you truly love you, you will find that the men who are attracted to you love you for you, and not for what they can get from you. You will find someone that loves you. The one you think you love doesn't love you. He loves himself! This is a very sad poem, yet, also very touching!

In Mind

I got you on my mind every second of every time

Thoughts of you and me reunited, this goal is mine

We been with each other for like the longest

Ain't puttin' up an act, I got ya back, and my lovin' is still the strongest

It was me and you runnin' that show, always happy

Waitin' for that day to come again... when will that be?

The love I got for you is true and that's the truth

It was love at first sight an' it was me and you

Walls can't keep me locked up forever

But even if it did my feelings for you won't stop, never

Seein' your image, almost constantly, I could hear your voice, see your face

openly

But then I wake and realize it was only dreams

-Pumpa

From The Beat: Yes, "only" dreams but such sweet dreams! If you can get out from under your current situation, then it seems obvious the only smart thing for you to do is to find a way not to come back here so you don't risk losing her forever!

My Mind

On my mind when I wake up.....

I'm still not in my house

I'm still in my cell doing time

I'm I waking up to loud staff

Am I gonna be safe or is a riot gone start

Is my case gone be dropped

I just think to myself when is this nightmare gonna stop

In the night I say to myself I have to change my ways.

-Nancy

From The Beat: Wow, you sure think about a lot of things when you wake up. It's good to think about when this nightmare is going to stop without also thinking about what you can do to prevent this nightmare from happening again. So, what are you going to change so that this outcome can change?

Far Apart For Now

For apart for now but soon we will be together

I need you to hold me through the stormy weather

Far apart for now but you will always have my heart

but that I think you had from the start

Far apart for now and I can't wait 'til you get back

I'ma go crazy and won't know how to act and that's a fact

Far apart for now but we will always be, together forever you and me.

-M&Ms

From The Beat: Far apart, yet close at heart.

A Family Of Five

I am from a family of five

Two have passed leaving three to survive

I am from loving and caring families

I am from a bloodline that I have yet traced

I pace through my time

Causing myself not to stress

I am an only one from a descendant unknown

A father too young

I am from the streets of Islands

I see my relatives deep in passages growing with no intent

I ain't from a group of people

That struggled to give me everything that seemed best.

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: Now that you've written of where you're from, can you write of where you are going? What do you owe to those "loving and caring families," and are you planning on giving them some of what you owe? The best way to do that is to make sure you don't get taken from them again!

Missing My Teenage Life

How do I feel about bein' in here? I don't like it! I can't even live my teenage life. I miss out on proms, dances, football games, and other good times.

I don't know what will happen to me next. I might go to CYA. But wherever they send me, I'ma hold it down and stay on my toes. I been through a lot in here — my best friend got killed and my aunt. I can't tell you my feelings in here 'cause I don't know how I'm feeling, I'm just here.

My girlfriend is helpin' me out a lot with my time. She rockin' wit' me to the end. I love my Tesa babes. Free Paco.

-Pac-B

From The Beat: Pac, wherever you might go, be the person you are inside, not what others want you to be. In other words, just be real with yourself and others. We're sorry about the death of your friend and aunt, and we can understand why you're not sure what you're feeling. But your focus has to be on your own future, and what you need to do in order to avoid spending any more time than absolutely necessary in places like this, or worse.

Who I'm Mad At

Who I'm mad at is first of all myself, for running in the first place. Second of all, the girls who molested me. The few guys who raped me, one at age thirteen, fourteen and two at age fifteen. The cops for taking me and my little brother from our mom. My foster mom for disowning me because of my anger. My ex for beating me and the drug lord for kidnapping me. (Thank God I got away).

I have forgiven all of these people, including myself, because holding a grudge is not gonna give me my mom back or my virginity back, its just gonna hurt me, and keep me from moving on in life, and I need to move on 'cause I'm almost 18. (I have to move on) I have to go by the law, and not put myself in those situations, and stop hangin' around those kinds of people (I still forgive those).

I am a stronger woman today because of my past. I thank God to be alive, for reals.

-Angelita

From the Beat: Wow. Anyone who's been through what you've been through and is able to forgive is truly a strong person. We don't know if we would have your strength if the same things had happened to us, and we admire you for being able to see that it is the future that matters, and not by dwelling on the past. No one should ever have to endure what you've endured, and certainly no one who is a child! Now you have to call on that great inner strength that has allowed you to survive to map out a future that you want for yourself, and then a plan to get from here to there. We have no doubt you can achieve your dreams if you apply what you've learned not just about life in general, but about your own great qualities that will help you move forward. Good luck!

I have forgiven all of these people, including myself, because holding a grudge is not gonna give me my mom back or my virginity back, its just gonna hurt me...

Farewell

I would have to say farewell to the streets and to my set. Farewell to my old homies and to the past. I would say hello to the future and try to get good homies who actually cares.

But I won't deny I'm going to miss those crazy times. And I remember when I first got jumped in, when I was busting jales y causando desmadre (doing dirt and making trouble). I would also miss those crazy lil' homies coming up in the clicka, 'specially those who passed away so young, very, very young.

This piece is dedicated to Flaco, age sixteen, Lil' Guero, age sixteen, Kachetes, age twenty, Moises, age fourteen, Dyablo, age eighteen, Reynel, age eighteen. Rest in peace my lil' homies. You know what I mean jelly bean.

-Pato

From The Beat: Pato, thanks for sharing this in class. It takes courage and strength to get up in front of all your peers and read this piece out loud. It will take more courage and strength to walk away from your old life and to do what you need to do to bring about your new life. But you have the courage and strength to do it!

Happy Thoughts

My man makes me smile. Just thinkin 'bout his precious face makes me smile, and happy. He means so much to me. I love him so much.

Another thing that makes me smile inside is that I'm eight months away from bein' free. (But to be eighteen and free) I can't wait off probation, livin' on my own. I been on probation for four years, been controlled my whole life. I'm 100% ready to take control of my life. But they both make me so happy especially my man, who I love so much.

-Angelita

From The Beat: Eight more months, huh? Well, good luck once you get out of here. Can you describe what it means to you to be "100% ready to take control" of your life? Hope everything works out the way you want.

The Last Time

The last time I felt good was when my mom brought my grandma from Mexico and they came to visit me here one week ago. And they just told me to be good and not to get in any more problems that I'm already in. When I get out she will already be back in Mexico. But I was happy because at least I got to see her. And that was the last time I was happy.

-Ar

From The Beat: We are happy for you too. Sounds like you rarely get to see your grandma. Will you be able to follow the advice she gave you not to get into any more problems?

Last Time Free

The last time I felt really good was when I was outside of this juvenile hall having fun wit my twin brother. Just chillin', having nothin' to worry about. I wish I could go back to those days when we were little, runnin' around laughing and havin' fun. That's the last time I felt good!

-Clarence

From The Beat: Clarence, what happened? You've been writing up a storm, until this... We all feel nostalgia for our lost childhoods, though we wonder if you were really able to go back to those days of innocence whether you'd remember there were also tears shed and pain endured.

Success

To see the hardship of success first you have to have respect! They telling me to say good-bye to the 'hood. I guess I should. There's a lot of lil' youngstas up to no good, but how can you say good-bye to the place that seen you grow. The Bay Area calles (streets) is where we roam. See California is our home, but I guess that's old. Time to move on. Don't stop 'til you reach the top and make it pop.

-Lil' Smiles

From The Beat: It's not easy, and we know it. But for your own good, sometimes you are going to have to sacrifice losing something for the better of your future. If you "reach the top" on the streets, it's not a position you can hold onto for very long before the next youngster with an attitude comes along to knock you down. Better to move into the legit world where you move to the top with slow and steady progress so that when you arrive, you have built a solid foundation to stand on.

Good Bye San Mateo

I'm going to say farewell to San Mateo, but it's only for a while. I'm going to come back, but I still don't know when. But until then you will always be going through my head.

-Jose

From The Beat: Where are you going? What will you do when you get there?

(Talented Writer)

(To: Clarence the Twin)

One of your poems really got to me. There are not a lot of you guys out there like you. You ask why do we think y'all be messin' around? It's because most of the guys we go with end up hurting us, breaking our hearts really bad, cheating us, hitting us, and more. We can't help but be scared it will happen again.

But at the same time we should give our trust till it is broken, but sane ladies can't do that. It's just too hard for some. But like I said your poem sounded like you read my mind. You're a great writer.

-Angelita

From The Beat: You are also is a great writer, Angelita. Nothing is better than seeing one writer giving props to the next.

Farewell to my old homies and to the past. I would say hello to the future...

I Am Going To Be Home

I am going to get out and go home. because I ain't in a gang or have a turf or a 'hood. I am going to eat food, and chill with my family. Also with my homeboy (family). So I don't have a farewell letter. But I know I won't be doing the stuff I was doing to get in juvie.

-Dillon

From The Beat: Dillon, you don't have to be in a gang or from a 'hood to get locked up. In your situation, you already know that. We know this is your first time and we hope you've experienced enough of this mini-slavery so that you will make this your last time.

Accomplishments

One thing I did that I am proud of is turn myself in. Another is having the strength to let go of my ex, who hit me. Another is knowing I'm beautiful (inside and out), smart, nice, and not all those things haters be sayin' I am. I am a great person, a truthful person. And that there is an accomplishment to know that.

-Angelita

From The Beat: What made you turn yourself in, if you don't mind us asking? Did something happened that change your mind or were you tired of being on the run?

I Am From

I am from where Niners stay
Where killin' happens every day
I am from where violence isn't a game
I am from dollar signs, trees spark
I am from a city that never sleeps
I am from pinto beans and sour cream
I am from where gangsters stay ever day

-Chicana

From The Beat: We wish you had spent more time on the beans and sour cream part of where you're from and less on the specifics of the place — because every place has its violence and killing. What do those pinto beans and sour cream tell you about your heritage? How far back does it go?

Thinking

Well, was up Beat! It's Duende from East Palo Alto. I have been thinking about my homies, my 'hood. I don't know what to do, go to my old self on the 'hood or just stay with my family.

Well, my reason to go back to the streets are 'cause the temptation, the people I grew up with, the people who helped me when I was down and out! I remember I was on the run and I had a friend who let me stay at his crib. He helped me out and the rest of my homies did too!

But I don't want to go back because I don't want to see my mom cry no more, see my family missing, crying 'cause they are worried about me! Sometimes I just say, "Forget my past! I'm going to do good for my family and for me!" But later, I get my temptations again. So Beat help me decide: to go back to the streets of East Palo Alto and bang! Well late. Al rato!

-Duende

From The Beat: Well, just think about what you want in life, Duende. The truth is you can't have both. If you go back to the 'hood, you will definitely leave your mother crying and your family needing you (and you will almost certainly give up more and more of your time and freedom to the system). You have to make your own decision, because if you don't, you're really allowing the system to make that decision for you. Do you want a future where you are successful and have a well paying job, or would you rather be forty years old (if you live that long) and still posting on the corner? Don't fall into the trap of thinking you can go back to the same old ways without facing these same old consequences. That's a fool's vision (or a child's). Making this difficult decision will determine how grown up you are, or how much more growing up you need to do.

Alone In My Cell

Alone in my cell I sit and think.
No time at all to stop and blink.
So here in my cell I sit and think.
I'm feeling weak from all my pain.
It's the hurt and love that stays the same.
So here in my cell I sit and think.
What has become of love and hope
And all the dreams to say afloat.
So here in my cell I sit and think.
I wish I could cry and let my pain fly.
I don't want to hurt not even a little.
So here in my cell I sit and think.
No time at all to stop and blink.

-Ash Night

From The Beat: This is a tight little poem, AN, but what we want to know is what is it you are thinking about? Can you try answering your own question: What has happened to your love and hope? Where are your dreams to stay afloat? What are your plans for when you get out of here?

I Am From

I am from my mother's stomach
I am from my bouquet of flowers
I am from the rainbow in the sky,
I am from my hometown Berkeley,
I am from a place call happiness,
I am from a place that I call home,
I am from my from a place that I love so much

-Baby Cakes

From The Beat: A nicely written poem about where you are from. Now tell us where you are going...

Life Sentence

If I was doing four life sentences in prison and had tattoos and was already old, I would just live life trying to be happy and not always being sad because I wouldn't have any more freedom.

-Eduardo

From The Beat: Easier said than done, Eduardo. We think you'd be much smarter avoiding the situation in the first place by not doing anything that will result in such a long prison term.

The Last Time

The last time I really felt good was when I was on my block kickin' it with the homies. Really just having a good time choppin' it up, drinkin' a forty, smoking a blunt. Not trippin' off nothing — not the police, not no other 'hood, not no one. That's on of the days I can say I really felt good.

-Vicious

From The Beat: If you want to feel that kind of "good" again, you have to find a way to stay out of here! Is there any connection between the drinking and smoking and being locked up? How will you guarantee when you are free to do these things again, that you will not hand that freedom back to the system?

Growing Old Behind Bars

Growing old behind bars is not something I picture myself doing. I messed up a little bit early on, but from this experience, I have realized the path I was taking was not a smart one.

If I was sentenced to a life-sentence, I don't know what the hell I would do. I would probably go insane. I already have a hard enough time staying home, I couldn't imagine forty years in a jail cell. I kind of have a picture of where I am going in life, and it does not end up in jail.

-Blur

From The Beat: Yeah, we don't think we can imagine spending the rest of our lives in jail, either. At least you have learnt from this experience and now even have a picture of where you are heading in life. Keep that picture at the front of your mind, and follow you dream.

When I Die

Remember when I die,
Girl don't you cry,
Just dry your eyes.
Remember when I die.
When I die, I don't want you to cry,
Just hold your head up high
And keep your dreams to the sky.
'Cause in your eyes, Babe, I see no lies.
And you know what, I love you so much.
I'm all out of excuses, you say I'm abusive.
I just say I'm ruthless, but in a way it's all useless.
So what can I do to make it right with you?
I'm so confused I wish I didn't have to walk in my shoes
I'm sorry I'm stuck in my ways,
I pray every day that maybe one day I'll change,
You know the rest, you saw my life's a mess,
And I'm up obsessed and possessed
I just think I'm over stressed.
When I die, and I finally pay the cost
Will you take it as a loss or just think about the pain that I caused
And when I die will you remember me
And all the good in me or all they see all the 'hood in me?

-Ar

From The Beat: Why does she see you as "abusive"? Have you abused her? Any male that hits a female isn't just "over stressed," he's also not ready for an adult relationship. You will be remembered for the things you did in this life, and we hope that includes many more years of doing things — particularly doing positive things so that you can balance the scales and bring yourself some decent karma. People will always remember the things you have done more than the words that you have spoken. So, what do you plan to do from this moment forward?

Keepin' It Real

Love is pain, money is green,
Everybody wanna live the American dream,
Fiends love drugs, killas bust slugs,
Seems like everybody wanna be gangsta and thugs
Everybody wanna be hard and depend on they guns
It depends on who you is bruh, don't matter where you from,

That's real talk, what you gon get from that?
A soldier for a soldier laid flat on they back
Everybody wanna pimp and put runners on tracks
Personally, you's a sucka with no respect and no hustle on yeah back

Some people is followers, some is leaders in the streets,
A follower'll stay stuck, but leaders stay on they feet
I'ma capo, a boss, a leader, keep doin' what I'm doing.
All I need is money, love, and respect to keep my generation movin'.

-Young Cutt-E

From The Beat: Forget about moving your generation, and start moving yourself! Where and how you are going to get that money and respect? Are we talking about respect from the street or from society — or from yourself? Can the American Dream be stolen or bought with drug money? Or does that dream require putting in steady effort over time so that when you reach it you have built a firm foundation to stand on? Every "capo, boss and leader" locked up is taking orders from some ordinary civil servant, some bureaucrat in the system who has power over you. Frankly, we prefer our leaders to be free!

The Last Time

The last time I felt really good was when I was with my girl friend. She's like my angel. When I'm with her, I feel good in my mind and body. When I was with her last, we laid down and just watched TV, but even though we weren't doing anything special, everything felt perfect, nothing felt like it could go wrong.

-Israel

From The Beat: Now that's called love. This is exactly what is meant by the phrase, "The best things in life are free."

My City

Last Thursday at the park in South San Francisco there was a drive by.

My city?
I feel concerned for my friend Adam, who lives by the park.

Did he live or get shot and die?
My city.
My city has changed in the last fifteen years that I've grown up.

My city?
Before you could walk down the street without fear.
Now when you walk you think how to avoid death.

My city?
Sometimes I lay awake in bed and ask myself, "Is this a dream?"
And "When will I wake up?"

My city?
All I have to do is remember
one thing to help me and my friends survive;
we are who we chose to be.

My city?

-Nick

From The Beat: Very nice piece. When you wrote this piece, you were not only talking about your city, but also about all the other cities around you. But since you can't change the streets, how do you plan to change your relationship to the streets? If, as you wrote, "We are who we choose to be," then tell us: who do you choose to be?

I don't want to see my mom cry no more, see my family missing, crying 'cause they are worried about me!

Farewell Speech To The Streets

I just want to say that I'm going back to my street because there was just too much memories that I can't let go. I just want to see everything back to the way it used to be. I just can't turn my back on the people who never turned their back on me. My street was just fun and chill. My friends and I would just smoke a blunt and pop a pill.

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: There is no right or wrong answer to this topic, we just wanted to hear your thoughts. But still, we're interested to know if there is some connection between your chilling on the streets with your pills, and coming to the hall. When you're under the influence, you can do stupid things that have serious consequences. So before you decide to go back to the streets, think of the consequences that happen after that, and decide for yourself if you are willing to accept those consequences.

Farewell To The Streets?

I don't know if I can eva say good-bye. It ain't easy, 'specially if you grew up there! I'm a fo' sure rep my block 24/7 till I die. I can't leave it like that. I planted my seed on the block and I'ma watch it grow until it tips over and dies. That's like getting a puppy and only taking care of him when he's young. Then when he get older you don't want him no mo'! I love my block, 'hood and who's in my 'hood. Can't leave it, when it come to my turf.

-Young P

From The Beat: Don't be so sure you'll rep your block 'til you die. No one can predict the future, or the changes that life will bring you. And change is certain, only whether you bring it about or let others bring it about for you is in doubt. You know, Young P, some puppies turn into mean adult dogs. Some even attack their owners or their owners' children. Then what do you do with them? There comes a time when you have to decide what is in your own best interest. If you think that interest lies in handing over your freedom to a system that cares nothing about you, then just keep doing the things that have already brought you here. Our hope is that you learn this reality before it's too late to do anything about it.

Dread

Dreads? I pick them over braids instead. I love the way they look.
I love they way they shake and never fake!
Shake them fast shake them slow
It really don't matter 'cause any dreads they go!
Yellow, orange, green,
I like to see dreads dyed different colors yadi-i-mean!
Dread make a statement saying I don't care, look at my nappy hair
because they're rare and that's why you stare!
Dreads ain't all about going dumb
They go back to our roots and rep where we from!
The best thing I ever seen done to a persons head is dreads
and that's it that's all that needs to be said!

-M&Ms

From The Beat: We love dreads too/We see art on more than a few/In fact we wonder, when all has been said/Whether we could get dreads on this old gray head!

I just want to see everything back to the way it used to be. I just can't turn my back on the people who never turned their back on me.

Mad

I'm mad 'cause I'm locked up! Not because of that but because I already paid my time, but I'm still here! I don't know why! But I want an answer! Is it my probation or my parents! Well, alrato Beat!

-Duende

From The Beat: We don't know whether you're still here because of your parents or your PO, but we do know that neither your parents nor your PO put you here to begin. You did that to yourself, so you have to live with the consequences yourself.

Stay

Stay! That's what I scream. And you say,
"It's good. I'ma be right back and everything gonna be okay."
But on that day you got taken away
and now by my side in this bed I have no one to lay
Every night I pray that God will bring you home
because I'm so sick, so tired of being alone.
I know you like doing things your way
but next time I scream "Stay," just say kay!

-M&Ms

From The Beat: We don't know who you are wishing was come home, but whoever it is, we hope that lessons have been learned to prevent this from happening again.

I know you want me to write about me and my family, but I never had them beside me!

Farewell Speech To The Streets

For me to stay away from my blocks and my barrio is going to be hella hard because I been through a lot in my barrio, like lots of fights. My homies are always there when I need them or when I need some back up. But now that I'm here locked up I feel lonely without my homies.

-Drifter

From The Beat: There is no easy way for anyone to let go of our past, especially something that we've so familiar with and comfortable doing. However, there are times when we all have to make hard decisions in our lives, and times when maturity requires us to sacrifice some things we like doing now in order to get things we'll like even more in the future, like freedom itself.

Only The Homies

I remember that I was kicking it with the homies and some rivals passed by. So we chased them, then I caught up to one and left him bleeding! That was the last time I had a good feeling.

I know you want me to write about me and my family, but I never had them beside me! The only ones I had beside me were the homies!

-Duende

From The Beat: And we imagine that many of those homies are still beside you because so many end up handing their freedom over to this "third family" (after your own family and your street family). The fact that you can get a good feeling by hurting someone else makes us wonder whether you believe in God or not, and if so, what that belief means to you? Do you think God created everyone, or just your set? And if the answer is "Everyone," then you must be very brave to be able to spit at God's creation as you have, and not worry about the ultimate consequences...

Missing My Family

Growing old while I'm at the halls is really different when I'm outside. It is really boring in my room. Most of the people do in their room is just read and sleep. I hate reading books because it is boring, makes me wanna go to sleep. When I'm outside I be always kickin' it with my homeboys. It is hard to be in here, because I miss my parents, brother, and sister.

-Hate Reading

From The Beat: Instead of wasting the time you have to spend in the hall doing nothing, you should make yourself read, whether you find it boring or not. (And we bet there are plenty of books that you would find truly interesting, if you gave yourself a chance.) It's time for you to think beyond your own immediate desires and begin to think about a future. Children do what they want (and don't do what they don't want), but adults recognize that they have to make sacrifices today to get what they want tomorrow. If you want to live in freedom by having a job, then you need to get your education, you need to read, you need to write, and you need to think about the steps that can take you from this place to the life you want. Kicking it with your homeboys is what led you to giving up your freedom, so think seriously about what's important to your future, and start doing the things required to bring it about.

I Am From...

I am from a land that forms slurs at the tip of its tongue
A life that's gonna finish although it just begun
A new era I'm creating myself because it's time
To change the world, can't be like nobody else
The root of unity, these things ain't new to me
But yo, y'all gotta get real within your own community
The here and now, so I gotta get better, you doin' dirt
Under the rug, I guess you figure whatever

-Purple Hayze

From The Beat: We wish we had some of the details that could flesh out this poem. For example, what is the new era you are creating for yourself? What does it mean to "get real within your own community?"

He's The First Thing

When I first wake up in the morning
he knows
He's the first person on my mind
The last thing I think about before I go to bed
he knows
He's the thing on my mind
I see beauty and the beast
he knows
He's right there on my mind
I think of Juvenile Hall
he knows
He's the only one on my mind
When I am lonely
he knows
He's all over my mind
But now...
He's there and I am here but he knows
He's still all over my mind.

-Malibu Beach Barbie

From The Beat: If you're talking about a flesh-and-blood human being (and not God), then we have to ask, why wasn't he all over mind when you did whatever it was that gave the system the power it needed to take you away? Next time you're free, we hope you always put this person you love above everything else, including the temptations that lead you here.

If anyone told me that I would be in rehab
for my 18th birthday,
I would've laughed in your face.

Good God

Good God, have ever had a feeling of hurt that no one can unhurt?
Good God, have you ever had a feeling of loneliness that no one can fulfill?
Good God, have you ever had an opportunity to do right?

-Marie

From The Beat: Are these really questions to God, or just statements about your life? So, now that you have "an opportunity to do right," what's your plan?

Don't You Want Somebody To Love

What's on my mind?
The kind of stuff that goes through my mind is crazy sometimes.
All of my memories seem to be getting pretty hazy.
My mind is numb and my body is lazy.
I feel so lost and dumb. I'm so lonely it hurts.
I just want somebody to love that would actually love me back.
What's it gonna cost? Practically my life.
Why? Why can't I cry? Why can't I feel.
I need some help and time to heal.
Sometimes I wonder can this be real?
Why don't I miss my mom and dad?
Why don't they care that my heart is broken and my world is dark?
Why is everyone leaving me? Will I ever truly believe in me? Stay clean and be happy to be me feeling peaceful and free. Tell me 'cause whatever the fee I'm willing to pay.
If I could just have somebody to love.

-Bobbi

From The Beat: Maybe you're coming at this from the wrong end, Bobbi. Maybe you have to start with you, not just believing in yourself but loving yourself. It is very important that you get clean and sober because that will lead to your own self-respect and love, and when that happens, you'll be surprised at the number of people who will want to love you back.

So Much On My Mind

Today there is so much on my mind. I want to go home back to Santa Cruz. All at the same time, if I go back to S.C. now, the chances that I would relapse are very high.

There is so much craziness going on in PSK. On Tuesday will be four months since I've been here. It's a trip because one year ago I was slanging and doing all kinds of dope. Now I am in rehab in SF. If anyone told me that I would be in rehab for my 18th birthday, I would've laughed in your face.

Well Beat, thanks for always listening to my crazy rambling. I'm out.

-Angel

From The Beat: There's nothing crazy about your "ramblings." Why would you have laughed if someone had predicted you'd be in rehab? Is it because you didn't think you had a problem, or because you didn't want to get sober? What have you learned in your four months that can help you when you get out of rehab — not just to stay sober, but to live a better life? What would you say to some other young girl or boy who is doing drugs but would laugh in your face if you predicted they'd be in rehab for their 18th birthday?

Thinking Of My Dad

Every day I wake up and I think about my baby and my dad. My dad is real sick, about to pass. My baby is so far apart for now just can't wait to get this off my mind. But for now the time is here.

-Marie

From The Beat: We're sorry about your dad, Marie. At least he has lived a full life. Now it's up to you to get out of here and out of the system altogether so that you and your baby can also live a full life.

My Nephew

I want to write about my two nephews, Raymond and Carlos. When my nephew Raymond was born, it really changed my heart. I learned to love others and myself. He makes me happy when he smiles.

To my other nephew Carlos, I haven't met you yet. I'm very excited to. I can't wait. I promise I will be there for both of you when you are struggling with anything or just need a little more love, I am there. Thank you Lydia. I love you and mom.

-Nessa

From The Beat: To be the best aunt you can be to Raymond and Carlos, you have to clean up your own act so that you can give them what all children need most: a caring adult in their lives that they can model their own behavior after. If you try to "teach" them from letters or words without action, they won't believe you. It's what you do that will count the most in their lives.

Why Am I Here

Why am I here? What is my life here for?
When I go home what am I going to go home to?
What is going to happen between me and my kids?
Will I get a job and take care of them?
Myself, I feel sad.
I think I just need to go home.

-LaRonda

From The Beat: Yes, you do need to go home. You've been here a long time. Your worries about your children are a sign of that sense of responsibility we were talking about, a sign of growing maturity. We won't tell you not to worry about it, but we will tell you the fact that you are worried about it makes us worry less.



My Mind

What's on my mind every time I wake up, is: How the hell did I end up back in here? I was out for so long, doing the best of my best, but some stupid stuff happened, and I fell into the wrong hole.

But another thing on my mind is my family and loved ones, and how mad they are at me and how I disappointed them. That's all I think about when I wake up.

-A disappointment

From The Beat: What stupid stuff? What hole? Was it impulse control? You need to know. For your sake and your family's.

I Am From

I am from the struggles in pain
I am from the family
I am from the peace

-Cameron

From The Beat: This sounds like a balanced place. No life exists without struggles, and no life should exist without peace of family. You have all three.

What I Am Thinking About

What's going on in my mind is me getting out of here and doing something constructive with my life and staying out of jail and not coming back ever again, you smell me?

Man oh yeah, I'm thinking about my patna Armon Donte Green aka Meezy. Today is his birthday 2-27-07, I think if he was here I wouldn't be in here I would be with him kicking it. RIP Meezy.

-Shady E

From The Beat: Seems like everyone knew Meezy and Meech and wants them to rest in peace. What do you think would help them rest in peace? Would it be knowing their homies are out there making stupid choices, killing and getting killed, stealing, robbing, getting locked up. We'd like to believe that they're looking down and hoping their homies will pull themselves up and become stand-up people who take care of their families and elevate their communities.

My Mind

What's on my mind right now is my girlfriend because I been locked up for about five months and that's all I got in my mind right now. I don't like to be in here all by myself but I did the crime so I have to pay the crimes by myself.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: Was the crime worth the time? Will you think about the time when you get out and have the choice to do another crime?

Hater

Yeah you see me straight, hard as can be.
You be mad, everybody can see you, you mug me.
I smile, you bump me I move over.
I'm gonna let you make a fool of yo'self.
You the hater and I am the hated.
The difference is as an apple is to a banana.
You mad 'cause I do think I am better.
You hate when you can't be the same.
You can strut yo' self and be the bomb.
You can strut yo' self and be the same.
You can strut but you will never embrace you inner beauty
because you just a hater.

-I see you, can you see me

From The Beat: There are a lot of really angry people in this world. Some may be born that way and others may have learned it from a hateful environment. Though this might make a person more or less sympathetic, we think you have the right attitude. No need to hate back. No need to bring yourself down because of someone else's anger. Just ride above it and keep smilin'!

First Thing To Come To My Mind

The first thing that comes to my mind when I wake up in the morning in juvenile hall, is — getting out!

Then the things that just come up in my head are, first, hugging my mom for releasing me and for being here throughout the struggle. Second, I also think about home and lying down under my covers and taking a thirty-minute nap, knowing I'm at home. And I think about going to work in Emeryville and making my money like I've been doing — and moving on with my life, knowing I'm free.

-Rick

From The Beat: Knowing you're home and knowing you're free, is a wonderful way to be. What work do you do in Emeryville? Making money legally is the only way to be! And stay free!

No Borders

The world without borders is some other time people will see when they die or when they pass away for good.

-Cameron

From The Beat: Does that mean that you don't believe we can live in a world without borders and boundaries? It's something that can only be achieved in another place.

Borders For Everyone

I want to talk about the borders because it's not just for Mexicans it's for everybody in California. So if they say that's all about Mexican crossing Mexico it's also about Africa and Puerto Rico and Alaska.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: The Mexican border is a big topic of conversation here because of where we live, but if you lived in Europe it would be different borders that would be debated. But everywhere in the world, the rich countries are trying to keep people from poor countries out. What do you think about that?

The Streets

i am from a world
where everybody
commit crimes
to be cool
a place where everybody
say they are from this and that place
and a family that works
for everybody from the city to the streets
and from a life of crime
but i am from a city
where some of us is solid
and some is not
but me i'm solid

-Blair

From The Beat: Quit the mob, so you can get a city job, someday. Quit before it's too late. Work toward your diploma or your G.E.D. Then when you go free, stay that way!

The Future On My Mind

What's on my mind is my future, morning day and night. Success: If I'm gonna get to that point. Family: How's mine doin', are they still okay? or if im ever going to have one of my own. Braveness: Will God ever forgive me for my many mistakes? Will my family forgive me, or better yet can I ever forgive myself?

-Jamie

From The Beat: Thinking about the future is good. It means you want to change what's happening in the present — and since that's being locked up in jail, we think it's a good thing. We also believe your family will forgive you. That's what family are for — through thick and thin, right? As for yourself, we don't know what you did, but there is always something you can do to redeem yourself. What would it be for you?

My Girl

i miss you girl
all the times we kicked it
you made my head whirl
they hated on us 'cause
we wasn't kickin' it in da bus
we stayed alone for days and days
and even months
i didn't smoke weed
but you had me keyed

-Momo

From The Beat: We had to change a word here and there. Sorry if we made you sound a there. But the love is their!

Chaky

I am from Oakland, the land of the sideshow. That's all we do on Saturday and if they say that I'm not from Oakland, I can stand up and tell everyone.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: What do you love about sideshows? What are the positive and negative things about them? Does anyone ever get hurt or do bad things ever happen? Is there anyway to keep the fun in it and make it safer for you and your friends and loved ones?

ROP (Rites of Passage)

What's on my mind since earlier today, has me stressing a little. I've been here for about three weeks, and I finally got an interview from ROP. I really ain't trying to do that, but I didn't have any other choice — but San Andreas or Nevada! My PO wasn't trying to give me a local group home.

I don't understand why I am going to ROP, since I only ran from one group home — and I have a baby on the way-way! I'm hella juiced about having a baby, and I need to step my game up fashow! Well, I can only hope ROP comes soon to pick this vato up, so I can go and show how a real Hayward vato can do that program.

Well, I give a shout-out to all doing tiempo (time) behind bars: county, halls, pintas, and camps or ranches! Stay up and maintain your composure.

-Flaco

From The Beat: ROP will not go well if you turn it into a war in hell. Represent yourself or you'll face a CYA cell. Walk away from the funk, or get played like the system's punk.

Alrato!

What it do, Beat! You know it's Scarface from Richmond! Me just chilling like a villain in the hall. Man, I'm just hoping that I get out of here tomorrow, so I can get back home to my hina and my moms; so I can take of them like I'm supposed to do.

The first thing I need to do, is find a job and finish school. I did my program right, so there shouldn't be any problem in getting out. So that's what I'm looking forward to. I got to wake up at nine and, hopefully, everything goes coo'.

To all, stay up, be safe, and stay out of trouble. I'm out. I'll write when I'm on the outs. Alrato!

-Scarface

From The Beat: As it turned out you went to camp. So get home every weekend that you can. Do your program right, so you can be home every day and every night. Then live a responsible life.

From Me To You

I am from the streets of Hayward. I am from a good family. I am from a gang.

-Soane

From The Beat: Is the gang your good family? What's good about them? Do they respect people, do they lift up the community, do they help members of the community, do they treat their children, wives, mothers with respect? Do they provide a future?

What's On Your Mind!

Everyday when I wake up I think about what I could've been doing instead of being in this Juvenile Hall I could be getting money or doing something. Constructive with my life and everyday I think about my wife Alesha Gant and I wish I could be with her right now. If you read this love ya much.

-Lil' Nell

From The Beat: Hopefully she's not reading it, or that means she's in jail. We're sure you don't want that for her as much as she doesn't want a husband who is locked up all the time and not around.

As I Sit In Here

As I sit here in the hall for the eighth time in ten months it makes me think damn, if I don't stop all this gangbanging, drug dealing, car stealing, and robbing I'm really not going to make it in life. But I have a problem that can't be fixed. My problem is that I know all of this is wrong but anyways with that in mind I still don't want to stop.

-Squeeks

From The Beat: Well, at the rate you're going, you won't have to make the decision to stop yourself. The state will make it for you when they send you to the Pen. Wake the hell up! It's not going to get better, it's going to get worse. You're in kindergarten right now. Wait until you're locked up with the big boys. Maybe all that bangin' and stealin' won't seem like it was so much fun after all.

Locked Up In The Hall

Locked up in the hall ready to go do my time in the CYA but it take forever for me to get out of here. Two years to go do that time and move on with my life.

-Girly

From The Beat: Be ready to keep your head down and do your program. Don't get mixed up with the wrong people. Stay smart. Don't catch more time by making bad decisions. You deserve better than to get stuck at the Y.

My Thoughts When I Wake Up

every time i wake up the first thing that comes to my mind is that i'm really back in the hall again from the beginning of the morning until when the day comes to an end every time i wake up i think about my family and friends my friends say they got my back but it's my family that's there with me until the end

every time i wake the memory of when my friend joe liu got stabbed with a machete and died i wish i could find the one who murdered him and take away that person from his family's life

-Victor

From The Beat: Don't let your rage take another human life and put you in a cage. The gangster life's the killer, and more will die the same way until guns and knives have seen their day. For your family's sake change your ways.

Release On My Mind

What's on my mind is my release! I was supposed to leave at two o'clock today! — but now I don't know when I'm going to leave!

But I still believe she will be here, any time now! So all I need to do, is have patience — and she'll be here, any time! Patience is a virtue, and I'll be out of her before I ... believe it!

-Snow Rabbit Meli

From The Beat: If you're reading this at all, you're reading this at home — 'cause we saw last week, you were gone!

A World Without Borders!

If it was a world without borders I would do whatever I want I would run around with a chop and light who ever up but that would never happen so forget it.

-Lil' Nell

From The Beat: So you would use the positive world without borders to do your negative and violent thing? Then what? Then they'd just have to put up borders again to close you in so you couldn't be so violent and then you'd have ruined it for everyone else. Don't be such a fool!

Thinking

I'm thinking about the ninjas that shot my brother. But it's good though. I'm thinking about my case; I hope judge release me soon. I been here for thirty days I wish I was at home. I can do what I want, smoke some purp, sip some Bo'. I want to see my girl I know.

-Erin

From The Beat: Okay, we took out one little line having something to do with revenge because we think you're smarter than that. What happened to your brother is inexcusable, but won't change no matter who you take revenge on. By choosing to continue any cycle of violence we fall prey to it and invite its destruction into our lives.

I Am From

A place where people shake their dreads people with tapers and low cuts, where people stand on corners al day doing their thang thug thizzles where scraper's be yoking a Two-tone cares and twenty-four inch rims.

And choppers that SWAT have, shot guns and thizzles and that's where I am from.

-Larry

From The Beat: You really capture the essence of the negative where you from and the way you see things. Are there things about where your from that contradict the picture you paint in this piece? Sometimes it's interesting, when writing about a place or a person, to include opposing traits—for instance, what are elderly people doing? Does anything grow there? What do the homes look like?

Wake Up!

The first thing on my mind when I wake up is my mom because I love my mom to death and I miss her very much.

-Montaje

From The Beat: We can bet she misses you too, and can't wait to have you back at home. Do you plan to work your program and stay out?

My One, My Only, My Best

I have one friend

Only one friend.

She my role model

As I am hers

She my diary

As I'm hers

I can keep her in check

As she do for me

We are as one

As far as you can see

Together my best friend

There's no separation

You mess with my best friend

You messing with me

-Guaneda

From The Beat: Loyalty is very important. We're glad you know that. And we appreciate how much you love your best friend. But just know that it's rare to stay that close with someone for ever and ever. Be prepared for one day growing apart a little. It doesn't mean you won't love each other or still be best friends, but lives change.

Do You Know My Name?

My name is Bendan, I'm so hot I need a fan I'm trying to flow so I can get some dough I'm trying to go to college so I can stack my wallet and that's what it is and I'm trying to stay a kid.

-Microphone

From The Beat: We wish more young people would guard their childhood and stop trying to grow up so fast. There's too much time to be an adult, and by racing to get there you skip all of the joy of being young.

Thugs Need Love Too

thugs need love too when we going through things that ruff and tuff we need love still

i'm from a block where there is no love

'cause if you show love you will get killed fast

you feel me

that's why i need love from a girl

family and friends but if not just

knock it off and be lonely

man thugs get lonely too

right about now i'm lonely

i am locked up

behind these alameda county walls

you feel me

(i'm out beat

see you next week

— one love)

-R

From The Beat: Next week pick another name, 'cause rogue is an EPA call. You feel? But anyway, what's the deal? Why you wanna stay trying to make your pay where you can get blown away fast? Then you lose your girl, family and friends 'cause it's "the end". You may feel stuck in the game, but you have the power to change, maybe.

Garbage

-Dizzy Birdman

From The Beat: We didn't print the longer piece you wrote after we read our typist's note. He wrote: "You can type it! I ain't typing this garbage." And this is from someone who's been where you've been, and will even have to do a taste of time again; but someone who knows the only way to keep shackles off your feet is to grow your mind beyond the childish fantasies of the street. OG's self-hypnosis = mass psychosis; unless you think incarceration is a bed of roses!

Hey Beat!

I'm back for the seventh time here. The last time I was here I did five months. And I'm back for running from my group home. Let me tell you, it was not worth it. Hopefully this time I can go home honestly. I can't say if I'll stay home, 'cause right now I'm very confused and I don't know what I want to do. Who knows where I'm gonna end up cause right now I have no idea.

-Malina

From The Beat: We don't know what's going on at home that makes you say you might not stay even if you get sent back, which is what you seem to also want, but you've already done a lot of time and now are a repeat offender. If you're about to be 17, now is the time to seriously shape up, before you start getting sent to adult jail and prison. You're young enough that you can still change the course of your life. But if you keep going down the same path, we don't want to think about what will happen. Take care of yourself, and ask for help from teachers, from the Boys and Girls Club, from other organizations in your community that work with youth and can help you get on your feet.

Today Is On My Mind

Every time I wake up I think about what's good for that day, I only think about what's gonna go on for that day in the present, because if I think of the future it makes my days go by way slower.

-Jennifer

From The Beat: So you're a live in the present rather than the future type of girl? We can appreciate that, but sometimes not thinking ahead can get you in a lot of trouble. Also, dreaming about what you want for yourself in the future, helps you shape your plan to get there. We agree that there is some day dreaming and star gazing that can be a waste of time, but having desires for the future is not always a bad thing!

On My Mind

What's on my mind is my grandma, my family and just a lot of shhh that's going on in my life like me going to CYA and doing my time. Get in and out, that's what be on my mind. CYA and my family and my lil papa.

-Girly

From The Beat: You have a lot to think about right now. Of course family is on your mind, but we hope you'll also spend time thinking about your future and how you can change your life to be more positive once you get out of the Y.

Why Fonk In Oakland?

people fonk over money
females, and ninjas shining
but yeah i still move mean
like lil papa said
yeah though ninjas can't respect
other ninjas shining
so ninjas mob out
some ninjas fonk over females
'cause they can't respect
the female chose up
and also 'cause she cashed out
while he was in jail
and she also was freaking on him
so the last reason for fonk remain
ninjas smokin' like a amtrak train
ninjas be fonking fo' money
'cause they're greedy
and me and my ninjas
the last of a dime breed

-Momo

From The Beat: Until you can write us that you're finished with the mob, you're no different than the next ninja funking 'cause slanging is his main job — and hitting licks till the five-oh picks him up off the street and puts shackles on his feet. Don't let that be you any longer — it's time to quit, go legit, live longer and stronger!

Friends

Friends will come and friends will go. The seasons will change and it will show I will age and so will you but our friendship will stay strong and true. Real friend.

-Girly

From The Beat: Friends are the fabric that weaves our lives together. They are so important. But friendships must be maintained and cared for too.

Family On My Mind

When I wake up in the morning I think about my family. I think about how they are doing.

When I wake up in the morning I think about my boyfriend. I wonder if he is cheating on me. I think about the letters l-o-v-e. I think about when he says he love me, does he mean it.

-Twanisha

From The Beat: Hmmm... if you have to wonder then something may be amiss. Usually you know when someone really loves you, you don't really have to question it. So the next thing you may want to ask yourself, is why you're wondering, what is he doing or not doing to make you wonder. Does he seem like he's insincere when he says things to you? Do you have reason to believe he's cheating on you? Etc.

What You Don't See

My unspoken fears
I stay tryin' to hide
Only in me
Will I ever confide

My unseen regrets
Don't let me sleep
It eats at my conscience
And crawls at my feet

My unshown pain
Forces me to run
Down goes the moon
Up comes the sun

Not yet invisible
I think we all can agree
But what's truly inside
Is the me you'll never see.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: The thing is, sometimes beauty comes out of pain, as your beautiful words emerge from your painful experiences. We hope you can enlarge the beauty as you diminish the pain in your life.

Just Doing Me

I cop attitude like I cop shoe. That's just me, do what I do. My lil' ninja papa do the best he do. Keep it lit, keep it real. Mad 'cause he lost the best we had. Papa keep your head up lil' ninja.

-Girly

From The Beat: Is "Papa" looking out for you like you look out for him?

Grapes

i love weed
it's my friend
i been smoking
since i was ten
i remember my dad
teaching me how to roll a blunt
the first time i got high
i felt like superman
thought i could fly
i will never stop smoking weed
because when i smoke weed
i can accomplish anything
weed is the best thing
that ever happened to me

-Eugene

From The Beat: Man, look where you are! Weed took you far from common sense. Yeah, you feel as if you could accomplish anything when you're high, but it's self-delusion — it's a lie! Maybe it tranquilizes your anxiety, but without sobriety, you're handicapping your brain — if weed were really such a good thing, why wouldn't want your little brother smoking? On the real, it's time to wake up, get real and deal.

My Thoughts

Does it matter the color I wear
The people I hang with?
Does this world have to be so inconsiderate
To the fact that everyone is different?
Does it hurt to be different
Without judging me or who I hang with?

-Young Dre

From The Beat: None of that should matter, but it does matter to some people. We'd like to think that it may come down to what you're doing? Even if you were doing all the right things in the world, people may still judge you and your friends. However, if you're referring to doing wrong and hurting others, directly or indirectly, then it does matter? Especially if it involves breaking the laws because the laws are suppose to be there to protect people and their property.

What Am I Going To Do When I Get Out?

When I get out I'm going to finish school, fill out my college applications, go to college, get a job, start my whole life over, one day at a time. Start a whole new relationship with my mom. Relocate my life. Get a better relationship with my sisters, and brothers spend more time with them.

-Anisa

From The Beat: One day at a time is a good mantra. We generally recommend you set small goals so you can achieve them and then work up to bigger ones.

Don't Even Have To Fight

Fighting is a petty thing. That's why I would tell a ninja to grow the hell up! And if he still wants a fight, I will tell him that he is not worthy of the effort.

-Dizzy Bird

From The Beat: Why do you think saying that would calm someone down? That's just going to make him madder at you. Think that one through again if you really don't want to fight.

Thinking About Time and Life

I'm thinking a lot about time and life. I wonder if when I get out, I will be different than I was right before I walked out of CYA's gate? I always wonder why I have to go to CYA!

Yet I know it is because I must accept serving time to endure my jail time. But one thing they ain't gonna do is put me through the agony of a life sentence. I have tons of things to do with my life after I'm free! I just need to get the chance to be a successful man.

-Dizzy

From The Beat: Okay, but judging from how stuck in your old thinking you are — you'll need to redefine your road to success if you hope to get far. Illegal means lead to broken dreams, maybe even the agony of serving life without a chance to be free. So use this time to set new goals for yourself in your own mind.

When I Get Out

When I get out I am going to try to not make it back into here again.

I will go to school everyday.

I will apologize to my principle for being arrested on her school campus.

I will try and not get into any more fights than necessary.

I say necessary because some people start with others first,

but they just can't back it up.

I will also go shopping for new stuff to stunt.

I will go back to school and try not to confront the girls who got their mouths open while I am in here.

I will keep it solid and only do me.

-Guaneda

From The Beat: We like your plan and your attitude. If you don't care what other people say or do, then they ain't go nothing on you!

What's On Your Mind?

When I wake up in the morning

I think about what I got to do in my day. And then I think about calling my lady and then calling my mom and dad to see what they're doing.

I think about how I am going to get through my day.

I wonder how I am going to get more money

because Target is not paying enough money.

I wonder when I get to see my girlfriend and wonder

what she is doing

when I am not with her.

I wonder how my grandparents are doing.

I wonder if I am going to make it through the day and night.

-Target employee

From The Beat: Unfortunately, when you're locked up you can't just call all those people you love to see how they're doing. Do you take the time to do that when you're on the outs? As for making more money, maybe a second job, or more hours at Target?

Young Bosses

I am from a place where hyenas run the streets
Day and night
And hanging on corners selling drugs
Turf thuggin', muggin' and getting' money
That's all we know how to do
We pop our collar's at the older girls
That bow down to us young bosses
And respect our town
Them boys don't play
When you walkin' through you better have
something bigger,
Us youngstas run the streets
Chasing six figures
Bow down
And respect my love one's who ain't with
us.

-Tip Toe

From The Beat: What you shared may, or may not be, your life on the streets. How about the other part to that life that involves incarceration and pain? How long do you think you can live that life, without receiving the other part of life that comes with it? We hope that you're not one of those casualties to that life style, as we're sure you may know a lot of others that have already become one. Aren't there other ways to make your dreams come true, that don't involve incarceration? That way you can continue to participate and enjoy life

All Flow

See, the click,
We on one
Pop off
With a grown chick
On the side of the drop off
Carpet candy red with the top off
It's all American muscle
It's not a knock off
My trench coat hang down to my ankles
Gun with a beam
I know ninjas that make 'em
My 'migos (friends) bring key low's fo'
pesos
Handle business in one sentence
Then, they gone
It's a business
My A's fitted and Bebe's on
I'm about to get it be cookin'
To a day long.

-That Ninja

From The Beat: The only reason why we allowed your piece in The Beat is because we have a message we hope you pass on to your "click" and also one we hope you adhere, too: "It might appear to be all fun and games at the moment, but don't cry when your fun is put to an end." We hope this was simply a flow and not a confession for your own sake.

This Life

In Berkeley it was fun when I was going to King I was getting money like it was nothing but when I got up to Berkeley High I started going to jail but the good thing is my money was stacking so when I got out and went back to the high school I started to buy cars and shhh. As I was doing my thing I was in and out of jail like an alcoholic. I was doing my thug thing or what ever you wanna call it, on the run every other month.
I eventually got fed up with it and started playing basketball in a group home and went to a High School named Poly and I seen a better life for me so I stopped smoking and got in shape and got a job at UPS making a lot of money.
Soon my mom moved out there and then my PO said that I was coming back down here for an old case and then everything went down hill, I went back to my old life.
I'm going to get myself back on track when I get out... Berkeley Boy that's the name.

-Berkeley

From The Beat: Good for you, we hope you can pull yourself up and out of your old ways and do something very productive with your life. What's the plan?

My Family And My Main Girl

What's on my mind when I wake up everyday in my cell, is my family and my main girl. My family is always on my mind because I miss them so much. I just wish that I wouldn't have violated my probation to be up in here, and not see their face for a while. That hurts me the most. My girlfriend is another thing because she is the one that's there for me. She cried when I got locked up, that hurt me too.

I just wish that none of this was on my mind, so I wouldn't think too much. Damn this got me stressing. I hope one day I would get a released so I wouldn't have this on my mind. So I could be out there with my family and my girl, and not missing one day without them.

-Young Stranger

From The Beat: What caused you to "violate your probation?" We ask because this sounds to be the cause to your problems! How do you avoid making the same mistake? It seems like you're "stressing" because you know you messed up, and feeling the consequences of that action. We all make mistakes and "stress" of it, just learn from this so you won't have to make the same mistake! This will also keep you close to those you are missing the most right now.

Tired!

I'm tired of being in here. I can't wait until they send me to my placement. I hate this place. I'm not used to being around goofy ninjas, so I keep to myself while I'm in here so I won't get used to being a ninja who takes everything as a game.

-Dennis

From The Beat: If you don't like being where you are right now, then stop getting yourself locked up! We guarantee you that if you do this, you'll never go through this experience again! Let ninjas do what they do and stay focused on what you got to do! If you think this max unit is ridiculous, it only gets more childish, foolish and more complicated while you move up the system's latter. Are you behind bars to pay attention to these fools or to do your time and get out? We know your answer, so keep your answer on your mind 24/7 until you're back on the outs!

I Can Be Hurting Inside

What is on my mind a lot of people wouldn't find out, because I don't give any signal in my face. I can be hurting inside and you wouldn't be able to tell. I learn how to do this because when certain people see that, they can get you mad. And if you show it, that person tends to keep doing it.

What else is on my mind, is my twin. For ya that don't know, we are the S-Twins. I'm going to camp and he's in a group home. But ya should already know.

-S-Twin

From The Beat: That may be a good way of dealing with your emotions, but how about when it's built up for so long, that you can almost feel it overflowing? Has it ever gotten to that point? What do you then do to relieve some of that pressure, or frustration? Has your emotions contributed to your name? How do you feel about being in your position, and your twin in his? Is there something different you can do, for you and your twin, that will keep you out of your current situation and frustration? Do you think it's worth doing?

Lost Both of You

What it do? I know you gone, and Leon got life in the Y.

I lost both of y'all -- you to the streets and Leon got a L and he ain't never comin' home. But that's OK 'cause I'm never going to forget about y'all and I can't wait till I get up there and see you again brah. RIP Ron B.

-Adante

From The Beat: We hope you have to wait a long time before you see Ron B. again, and that if that time comes, you can tell him good stories about the life you lived, the way you got it together and raised a family, and you got a good job, so you can tell him that you rose up for both of you, for his memory and for his troubles. And Leon's too.

Back To The Hall

I'm hella mad because I just left the hall and now I'm back for another crime. But I ain't trippin' 'cause when I get out I'm a hit the block with all my homeboys, to kick it on the streets.

-Jaime

From The Beat: Sounds like you're cool with the cycle of incarceration. Doing the same things will bring you back to the same place, the halls! How long can you kick it on the streets, if you're doing things that will take you off the streets? How "mad" can you really be about being "back," if you say "you ain't trippin'?" We don't want another one of these pieces from you, but it doesn't sound too good.

My Mind

What's on my mind? The things that are on my mind: Life in the Hall is a living hell and I would love to go home to my family and start my life on the right foot with my mind and act back on point so I can go to college and then go to the NBA, if all goes well in my mind.

-Dante

From The Beat: Are you locked up for life? Because being locked up for life is the only thing that can prevent you from doing what you would like to do. You're family would love it if you did this, too! You have the right thoughts; now walk the talk.

Still Stressin'

I'm in here, still stressin' frustrated, ain't really got no blessin' Tryin' to keep my faith in God People been gettin' off easy lately But I'm not worried now. I'm in here daily Showering and living with these dudes,

Man these dudes ain't 'bout that

They be talkin' 'bout how they sweeter than skittles Still whisperin' at tables but ain't nothin' I can't handle I'm still mobbin' Waitin' for God to give me a blessing

that I probably don't deserve but still need.

-Lil' Marcus From The Beat: This piece is a classic examples of the contradictions of being locked up. On the one hand, you're trying to connect with a faith that helps you, stay strong against the bad stuff: not just lockdown, but also all the activities that led up to being locked down. But you're also dealing with all the b.s. hating that people can do -- the threats and insults coming from the next table, the next cell. On the outs that drama came from -- the next block or the next street. At best it's distraction, at worst, it's destruction. What do you do to keep yourself from getting caught up in that drama while locked up?

Beat Within I pound my chest just to see What's in me Cold hard, locked doors mist with Hell what fears me Clogged veins, right aim, picking cotton like slaves that envy me. LISTEN TO MY HEART -- THAT'S THE BEAT WITHIN ME.

-Justin

From The Beat: There's very little we can say about this incredible short poem, except thank you. We dream of The Beat -- and your heartbeat -- being so loud one day that it just can't be ignored. Something so loud that the whole world will have to listen and feel the pain and anger and love and power of the writers -- writers like you.

From...

I am from a place full of designated hitters.

-Smash Twin

From The Beat: We think we know what you mean by "designated hitters?" Do you consider yourself one of them? Where do these people usually end up? Is there a future in being one of those people? There must be a lot of stress and worry that comes with that life. Would you agree or disagree? In the end, is it worth it?

Millions Of Things

When I first roll over I first give thanks to God for giving me breath and waking me up in my right mind, Then of course I say "damn, I'm still in this cage and I can't even shhh or spit if I want to."

Then I think 'bout why I'm in here and if I'm ever gon' get out.

Then I start thinking 'bout if the morning staff gon' act like j-cats again.

Then I think about my family and if God gon' keep his heal of protection around my two brothers, because most of them could end up anywhere, just knowing what they be out there on the outs doing.

Then I think 'bout my mama and if God gon' help her through this pregnancy while she got Diabetes.

I guess I got a million things on my mind when I wake up.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: All this is just those first few seconds of waking up! Think how much is there: Your immediate future (how to deal with staff and the daily struggle of lockdown); your past (the troubled history that brought you into jail), the love and concern you feel for your brothers, who are caught up in a terrible cycle, and finally the great love you feel for your mother and the challenges coming up ahead. Many people in your situation would distract themselves by thinking of a petty grievance with another detainee, or escape fantasies about being high and wild out on the streets - but you have the great gift of knowing how to look reality in the face. You think about everything that is hard, and everything that matters - eyes wide open. What will you do to keep them open once you get back out and find yourself having to face even more distraction?

What's On Your Mind

Every time I get up in the morning I think about whether one day I could be free again, because also at night I think about my family and I think about what they might be doing and I think about how much I love them.

I also think that when I get out of here I'm going to work a lot and I'm going to be a respectful young man and I won't think about coming to jail.

-Josue

From The Beat: Your love for your family, your hope for the future. This is about as powerful a one-two combination punch as there is. Use it to win your fight against the lifestyle that got you in trouble!

A Day of Life

The first thing on my mind is when I wake up is think of what the day is going to be like. Am I going to get in trouble or am I going to do good? The next thing on my mind is pray for a day of life.

-Sisco

From The Beat: Do you get a feeling on a bad day like you know you're going to get in trouble, you just have that feeling? Or does trouble come out of nowhere and take you by surprise? Or do you decide that no matter what on a certain day you're going to do good? Is it up to you, or chance?

Little Lights

Another year has passed How long I've missed you At times I've loved you At times I have forgotten you The little lights of my tree seem to speak of you And between your cries and sighs

It makes me think of you Christmas and I without you I am in solitude I remember the day I lost you I don't know where you are But I wish you luck I wish you well with all my love.

-Lazzy

From The Beat: This poem has all the wistfulness and sweet sadness of the last minutes of the day, after the sun has already set but left the sky bright with color, to give one last burst of joy before dark. Perhaps that's what the best poetry is, a mixture of sadness and beauty.

I'm Sorry

For the way I have been actin' out there on the outside. And now I'm inside lookin' out.

I'm sorry for the people I had did bad stuff to. I wish I was not off the pills that day. I wouldn't be here in the first place. I'm sorry for putting my mom in so much pain. I just need somebody to forgive me for what I did to so many people in this world.

I just need God to forgive me for my sins. I know what I did was so wrong, but I couldn't help it, it was the pills that take over my body and made me do what I did to that person -- it wasn't me.

I just want to say I am really sorry for the pain I put people through. Now all that stuff I did to people is coming back on me, putting me through so much more pain.

But I sit here in this stupid room thinkin' that I did was wrong and I knew I shouldn't have did that all along. I'm sorry Mom.

Why did I do what I did that was so stupid of me, I miss my Lil' Bra, that was my ninja, he had my back whenever I needed him.

I did a lot of people wrong in my life but I have to do what I have to do in here. I have to live with what I did on the outs.

By me being in here I am missing out on being with my mom and brother, I am missing out on spending time with my baby momma. I am missing out on having fun with my ninjas, but I need to sit down for a minute but for this long.

But for me I got it easy. Some people in here did some stuff worse than me. I go to court on March 7 to find out how long I'm going to CYA for. Hopefully not that long

-Al Boo Boo

From The Beat: Your heart beats extra strong in this piece, even in all its sorrow and regret. But in many ways, it seems as if you were more "imprisoned" while you out there taking pills than you are now. As you say the things you did, it "wasn't you." So now, in jail, you're rediscovering who the real you is, you're rediscovering the side of yourself that loves his family, that strives to be better, that wants to change. In a way, you are more free now than you were before. The question is how will you hold on to this freedom, both while you are serving your time and after you get out?

The Only One People Aren't Understanding Me

'Cause I'm the only one but they don't recognize my ability to tear down the sun Try to playa hate me and my race Ya can't even keep up with my pace But I ain't trippin' though, cause every dog has his day My day gon' come and ya gon' pay in much violence way I wanna get out the system With so many reasons that I can't even list them The devil got me gon' insane I wanna beat the oddz, but I'm trapped in pain. How should I explain The sickness that I feel in my brain I can't no longer maintain Lost in my own mind, stuck in a war line Try to bust at me from the back with no remorse Can't stop me with deathly force My only fear in death is damnation With the heart to fight the whole nation

-Rahimi

From The Beat: Don't waste your time/tryin' to fight a battle with your rhyme/the haters will be there in jail and in life/it's up to you feel the cut of that knife/cause it cuts like steel if you let it/but don't be stuck (hey you're the one who said it)/keep your eyes on the prize and your heart on your hope/and you'll fight your way out of the system's rope.

A Second Chance

When I know I'm goin' to CYA for a long time, for most of my teen life,

I cry sometimes when I think about what I did. I know I shouldn't have been at that that place at that time. I was so stupid for doin'

what I did. They tryin' to send me to the big pen, but I know in my heart God will forgive me and give me a second chance.

People in here test me but I won't let it get to me. Some people in here help on my mistakes. I just hope the judge don't give me a long time. But from what I hear, he tryin' to give me at the least five or six years in CYA.

I hope and pray that it won't happen to me, because I have a baby

on the way and I want to be there for it.

Thank you for your time

-Al Boo Boo

From The Beat: That second chance you are asking for may be this time you're spending in jail! There is so much you can work on while you're locked up, especially in terms of reading, writing, and working on school stuff. If you get a few years, what will you do with your time? Think of it as a long term investment in your baby's future: Give your baby the incredible head start of an educated father, a wise man who has learned from his difficult past, and can pass that wisdom on to his children!

Safe

What's up with it Beat. It's Sisco, just chilling up here with the homies on Camp Sweeney. Yeah is cool, the only bad think about it is that I have to wait a month to get my home visit.

Well I don't have much to say, but to tell all to stay up and be safe. I'm out.

-Sisco

From The Beat: You say you don't have much to say, but there's a lot to think about in these short words. Like, when you say "stay safe," you could make a whole book, t.v. show, movie on what it takes to stay safe out there when you're young and caught up. Have you been safe? And do you think you will be safe on your h.v. and when you get out?

Stress

Here I am again writing my thoughts again. On the real, I'm stressin' up here in here because in a few days they're moving me to a new facility that's not going to be like this one. It's not as good as here even though you, and in the new jail they don't even have new windows in your room.

Really I think that I'm going to go crazy.

For those who get the chance to go to camp, don't run. Do your program. Stay solid and keep your faith in God

-Lazy

From The Beat: When you first came to the Hall, you wrote a piece saying you thought being here would drive you crazy. But yet you rose above it - and you're running a good program, continuing to keep your hope alive, working on your English skills and generally staying up. It just shows that so far, when it's been dark, you've made your own life. Have faith that you can do it again!

Waking Up

When I wake up in the morning, the first thing that's on my mind is school, and my family. School is the most important thing in my life. I care about school because I want a good job, house, car.

-Nate
From The Beat: Education gives you a better shot at getting and achieving some of the things you may want in life. "Family" and the support that they give is also very important. If these are the things you value, then what brought you to the halls? We all make mistakes though. Do you think that this time has given you a chance to refocus on your priorities? Are you more focused than when you came in, to make what you want for your life happen? If so, then your experience has been a valuable one!

Another Day At Camp

What's up Beat. This is Grim from Hayward. This is just another boring ass day here at camp. Well not that much because I got my Friday to Sundays.

So I'm not here on the weekends no more. I used to be here on the weekends and it was hella boring, but not no more.

Well I wanna say what's up to all the homies, especially my ninja Chucky, down in the Hall -- don't get in trouble and hopefully you can come to camp. So stay safe and outta trouble and do your program the right way.

Well I got at least three more months left of camp. I can't wait to be released. Well that's all for now until pencil meets paper.

-Grim
From The Beat: Next time break down a weekend visit for us and tell us what it's like!

Second Time Here

Was up Beat? Yeah, this is Zuko from camp. Second time back. This shhh got hella bootsy but I'm still gon' pimp this again because now I got a strike. I'm going home this weekend for my first home visit and time gon' go by fast. I only got to do a five month program this time so I'm gon' be outta here quick.

I don't get in trouble or none, so as for now I got a perfect program. I can't get in any trouble up here because I've been here before and the staff expect me to do a perfect program and I should know all the rules.

But Beat, it's about time go, so you all stay up!

-Zuko
From The Beat: It sounds like this time around you've learned the ropes. And if you've got a perfect program so far, that's even better. Good luck getting through camp and remember - if you get stressed, don't fight it, write it!

Poem

Roses are red, violets are blue
I hate juvenile hall as much as you.

-Larry
From The Beat: Don't we know it, unless you are truly taking advantage of this painful experience.

Hayward

i am from where violence is nothing new
where many wear red and many wear blue
i am from where in the bay you see ranflas with beat slappin'
but in the night you hear cop sirens and guns clappin'
i am from where gang task will blurp you for nothing
they act like they're hard but they really be frontin'
i am from where it can be your best day but your worst night
'cause nowadays people shoot and won't fight

-Lifer
From The Beat: For the police and you too — it's not about hard, it's about smart. If you don't put the gun away and quit the criminal life, where you're from will only be a place to write, while you're banging for your "pride" on the inside.

Where's The Wine

I was on my way to the Marriott with my lady
She wanna show me a good time before we get shady

I guess the broad knew it very well,
'Cause she told the waiter to bring back lobster tails

I was thinkin' (I was thinkin') man this broad's alright

She ain't said nothin' to mess up the night

So I kept on eatin' till I got full

Silly ass broad said let's jump in the pool

Ok, you a fool but where's the wine

She ain't said nothin' so I ask her one more time

Girl where's the wine

she said at the pool

she said I did something special, just for me and you

I was wit' it, I was wit' it.

I ask if she smoke, she said I do, so I rolled the dro'

-Davon
From The Beat: Your skills are in place, that's for sure. It's a fantasy date straight out of MTV or Crips, and we're glad to print a writer like you who is so good at painting pictures with words and finding original rhymes. We had to do some editing to keep your story respectful (we're cool with having our writers speak on love and lust - but if there's language that puts people down in it, we cross it right out.). Even so, there's too much illegal here! We're looking forward to part 2, and make sure it's Beat appropriate. Your talent is not one to miss!

I used to be here on
the weekends and it
was hella boring, but
not no more.

Where I'm From

I am from happiness

I am from evil

I am from juvenile hall

I am from my mom

I am from emotion

I am from God

I am from my dad

I am from green trees

I am from a place of evil.

-Montaje
From The Beat: The pairing of seemingly dueling attributes is a very powerful literary device, and you just used it to its full potential in this piece. Nice work.

Words For The Beat

What it is Beat? This yo boy Y-E trying to say what's up to everybody that's reading this right now.

Well, I should be getting out soon but I will keep writing because it might keep me out of trouble. And stay off the block where I should not be. You know wher e I should be right now? Home with my family and going to school in the morning, getting good grades. Well, I got to go Beat.

-Young Y-E
From The Beat: We hope you're sincere when you speak of what you'll do! You know where and what you should be doing, and especially what to avoid. Now the only thing left to do is bring those thoughts to life with action. Give what you mentioned a real shot when you get. You may be surprised with how it really works out for you! But that's only if you're serious, which you do sound!

I Am From

I am from a place where anything is possible. I am from freedom and pride. I am from the real, white, and blue. I am from a place where people try to start violence.

-Brandon
From The Beat: Why do you say anything is possible? We'd like to believe it's true, but there are many arguments as to why it's not. If anything is possible for you, what do you want and how will you make it happen?

Boyfriend

Sexy, love
A-hole, sweet, difficult
I love my friend
Moneyman!!

-Twanisha
From The Beat: So he's sweet but also an A-hole? Explain how that works again?

I Am....

I am from Oakland.
That's where I be at all day.
Some nights, I was out all night,
It don't stop.

When I get out, I think I will do the same stuff.
I will do it a little different, so I won't have to come back to this place, you dig?

-Young Lonz
From The Beat: How so? No matter what way you do things once you get out, you'll end up with the same results. 2 + 2 will always equal four, and doing dirt will always lead to a bad ending. You don't believe us? Don't try us because the only person that will end up losing from not following our words is you!

RIP

What' up Beat! It's your homie Indio. I just want to talk about my loss of homie Los. Well it's been a couple of months now since he been gone. Well don't got much so I'm out.

-Indio
From The Beat: Indio, we hope you write up an RIP for Los, saying who he was on the inside, what you will miss about him, how it was at his funeral. The people we love live on in our memories. Share those memories with The Beat!

Where I Am From

I am from my momma; she made me who I am
but I was not born to be a criminal.

I was born to be somebody and that's what I'm going to do when I get out
'cause ain't nothing to do in Juvenile Hall.

-Lil' Damani
From The Beat: No there isn't much, and we can tell that you have too much life and intelligence in you to waste it behind bars.

What's On Your Mind?

What be on my mind when I first wake up is money. Money is a motivation to me because it keeps me occupied, and it motivates me to be smarter and smarter in the game. For me to be allergic to broke. This is a real definition of a "D-Boy"

-D-Boy U2

From The Beat: "Money" is on the minds of a lot of different people, but most people go about getting it in a way that doesn't threaten their very freedom! How do you become "smarter and smarter" in a game that can only be won by not playing in the first place? How long do you think you can outsmart... whomever? Have you considered the hustle of a legit. job? Or is the "D-Boy" image what you really want to live up to?

My Baby Mama

When I wake up, the first thing that's on my mind is my baby mama. I think of her because of my child. I think that because I hope my child is not born while I'm locked up.

I think of my child, not 'cause of the life he lives, but the life I live. I don't want him/her to get the impression that being locked up like a caged animal is ok, 'cause its not. But mostly I think about her still being there when I get out.

-Lil' D U2

From The Beat: Now you have to change not just for yourself, but especially for your child. You can't really get this message across to your child from behind locked doors, but only from freedom! Hopefully you will spend the next couple of months very wisely, preparing for the arrival of your expected child — which means preparing yourself. Having a child and being a parent present big responsibilities, and the first of these is being there for your child as the adult model he or she will need. If you are a responsible adult (meaning living freely and acting in ways you'd also want your child to act), you will make a responsible child. If you are an irresponsible adult, your child will be an irresponsible child. It's up to you.

What's On Your Mind

The first thing I think about is my family and how they're doing without me. And then in the night I wonder about how I am going to get out of this problem I am in. I get out of the problem by not thinking too much but I got to get myself together so I can figure out some things.

-Lil' Speedy U3

From The Beat: It may be easier on you not to think too much about your problem, but unless you do put some serious thought into it, you'll be left with worrying about how your family is doing without you... In other words, the only way to stop worry about your family is to stop doing the things that let the system take you away from them.

Court Is On My Mind

My court day is on my mind. My family on my mind because I think about them when I go to sleep. And my homies on my mind because I hope they don't get hurt or end up in here with me.

The court is on my mind because I don't know what the judge go do to me, if they go tell me I am going to the Ranch or I am going up to Glen Mills. But if it comes down to it, I am just go do my time. At the same time, I am still go think about the judge when she gave me that time.

-Young Jt U3

From The Beat: With all that thinking about your family, do you also think about where you messed up and gave the system the power it needed to remove you from them? Do you also think about what you have to do differently if you want a different outcome? Can you share some of that with us?

'Bout To Be Free

I'm bout to have a court date. Yup, Dizzy bout to be free. I had to write this last verse for you cats in The Beat. I'm tired of these punk police harassing me. Man they doing too much. I can't stand 'em. Maybe 'cause I stay with rocks like the Grand Canyon.

-Dizzy U2

From The Beat: Maybe the reason why you're so worried about the "police harassing you," is because "you stay with rocks." If you're not doing anything wrong, then you don't have to worry about anything most of the time. Since you're "about to be free" what will you do? Have you learned anything from this experience, or will you continue to do the same things? Those rocks in your pocket are like a dead weight that will always bring you down. We hope you learn this while there's still time to do something about it.

What's Really On My Mind

What's good with The Beat coming out that nice unit. What's on my mind are things, people, places, everything. Mostly when am I getting out. When I'm gone put down a another demo with big bra. What I'm a do when I get out. If I'm gone be successful at what I do. I think about what my mom is going through and how my family is. What I'm missing out on.

But what's really on my mind is if I'm really living in reality. With that I'm a leave that for The Beat to answer and everybody else.

-Tariq U2

From The Beat: Those are a lot of natural questions and/or concerns to have. You play the biggest part in answering those questions, which you, right? As for "living in reality," can you feel those walls when you touch them? Are you as free as you'd like to be? Your present reality doesn't have to be a long-term reality. Unless you want it to be.

Concerns On My Mind

When I'm gonna get out of here? Where am I gonna go? If it's going to put my funeral on hold? Who am I going to see? Am I going to stay, or run? How's my family going to be doing? If they're okay, safe? Are they healthy? How my friends are doing? If they're alive, dead? If I'm going to have kids? Am I going to change my life around? What is the future going to hold for me?

-Hydro U2

From The Beat: Those are a lot of things to be concerned about. Some of them sound like they're down the line. And it's good you're concerned about your future. Do you think maybe you can focus on today and what you can for yourself today, that may also benefit others and your future? Are you putting together a plan for the outs that will keep you from entering these halls again? Tell us what your plan is.

High Life

Right now I wish I was on a first class airplane to Hawaii, waiting to lay on a beach with a margarita on the side. After that hop in my Lamborghini Dallarto. eat ribs, steak, fries, ice cream, candy and all dat good stuff. I wish I had millions of dollars and have a luxury life. Well I don't. Instead I live in a middle class apartment and got a cheap car. But as soon as I leave, I'm guaranteed to change my life around. I'ma make my wish come true, fo' real

-Alex U3

From The Beat: So, would you turn down a flight to Hawaii that was not first class? Just think of what you're crying about, Alex. There are people who can't afford to eat, who are literally starving to death, but you're crying because you have a cheap car? There are children dying every day in wars around the world, but you're upset because you don't have a luxury life? Maybe it's time to think about what's really important in this world and in your life.

In The Beef

Yeah, ninja, I'm in the beef, so what? I'm still gettin' money and still gettin' on you ninja heads. Y'all some young punks. It's 2007. Time for y'all young punks to step it up. I'm out.

-Lil' Harlem U2

From The Beat: What has being in the "beef" gotten you? Luckily you're still around because the "beef" has taken a lot of people out. As long as you're incarcerated (and you seem determined to make that a long, long time), the money you're getting is going straight into the pockets of those who operate this system, and they're very grateful to you for providing for their children. Do you imagine there may be those who consider you a "young punk?" What do you say to them? Unless you're talking about "stepping it up" in your writing and delivering more than five tiny sentences in an hour's workshop, "Stepping it up" may mean more severe consequences. Are you ready for that, or do you think you're immune from the law of consequences?

Wake Up

The government (white people) took slaves from Africa and messed up their whole lives. That is inhuman. Now they free, their emotions are going crazy. After so much years in slavery, you cannot expect them to adjust to your rules. We're all just as scared as any other human being. We have fears. Our fears lead us to trouble.

We need a mental, verbal revolution. There is no black people in government except one. And I thought the blacks were supposed to be free. It's still the same racism only it's legal and on the law is racism. Wake up and fight for freedom again.

-Alex U3

From The Beat: We believe that 200 years of slavery in this country did leave far too many black Americans behind and trying to catch up, and we also agree that the government has not done nearly enough to bring those left behind into the "American Dream." But you are wrong when you say racism is the same now as before, or that we have only one Black in government. Besides Senator Barack Obama from Illinois (who is running for President) and Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts, there are 43 Black members of the House of Representatives (Congress), one Black member of the U.S. Supreme Court, hundreds of Black sheriffs and chiefs of police, not to mention countless Black people in business, sports, entertainment, education... No one has to sit in the back of the bus and no one has to drink at a "Coloreds Only" water fountain. If you read how bad things were for your grandparents, we think you will agree that there has been much improvement — and we agree that there is room for much more improvement. What are you doing to contribute to that improvement?

A Long While

We both locked up, and it's been a long while
I get to missin' yo' ways, yo' style and smile
But I found out a secret, the one you tried to hide

But no matter what, I'ma be on yo' side

I wish you told me instead of someone else

Put it in the open instead kept it to yo'self

Damn, a baby on its way

What a secret hide from your wife

But its nothing we can't get though

Jus' be a daddy to yo' baby and forever stay true

Sey Sey and Reezzy to the very end

Forever your girl, lover and friend

-Lil' Mainy Sey Sey U5

From The Beat: We're not sure, but it seems like you're saying that your boyfriend kept a secret from you, which is that he's going to be the father of a baby, but not with you... Is that right? If so, we're not sure how you can be his girl forever since it appears he doesn't share the same commitment to you to be true and honest. Maybe we just don't understand what you were trying to say. Can you clear it up for us?

Where I Am From

What's good with The Beat? This ya boy Twon coming from that nice U3 status. Well, let me put you up in game about this topic.

Anyways, I was raised on bread and baloney and my mama told me don't hang around people that's phony. So therefore, if it wasn't for the 'hood what would I be? Another average person that ah never be a sucka. Which mean that 'cause of my 'hood I am special 'cause what I do for the jets. If I wasn't raised in the 'hood I would not be no sucka which means ain't nobody go punk me.

And also I live in a place full of crimes so when them black and whites see use they automatically think we criminals.

-Twon U3

From The Beat: Don't you think that every child who grows up thinks of himself as special, whether he or she grew up in the 'hood or not? How can you know what you would be if your circumstances were different? And as far as the police automatically viewing as criminals, that may be true... but how much do you contribute to that view? And what do you plan to do to change it?

To My World

Lanae and Leroy we were meant to be
That's why females always hate on me
The way we started off and look at us now
One day our lost love will be found
Words can't express what you mean to me
I love you so much. I love you dearly
No matter what I say I will never leave
Because there is no place I would rather be
Than in your arms every night
I even love you when we fight
When you were in jail I stayed by your side
Now I'm in a cell and no matter what
I will always love you
That's why I got that tattoo

-Nay-Nay U5

From The Beat: It sounds like you're double blessed with a wonderful mom and a wonderful boyfriend. With that kind of support waiting for you, it would be a shame if you went back to doing whatever it is that brought you here...

Mommy, I love you

Mom, I love you; I should've listened
Out making money got me in this one
It's so hard to get out. Everyday I have doubts
Wondering when will I get out
And return to my family
To the ones who really love me
Missin' my mom every day
Leaves me with no words to say
But now I know to listen to you
And do all things you tell me to
I know I caused so much hurt and pain
There are a lot of things I plan to change
Leave the fast life alone
Because I know you want me home
So mom, just remember
There's no one like you: My Winner
I Love you Deborah, aka Mom

-Lil' Nay-Nay U5

From The Beat: We hope you take this piece and tape it to your mirror at home so you can read it every morning. It's so much easier to make the promises you make to your mother here than it is to keep those promises when you're free to make your own choices. But by keeping these promises, you will also be keeping yourself out of trouble and out of the halls. You owe your mom and lot, but the most important thing she wants from you is you!

My Existence

The first thing that passes my mind is why do I exist?

-Marc U6

From The Beat: Well, if this is all that you can come up with in a hour's workshop, then it's no wonder you have to ask why you exist!

When I Get Out

When I get out, it's time to turn my life around and start from scratch. Try to switch around by complete my group home. Then I going back to my family. I didn't like last time.

-D-M U3

From The Beat: We're not sure what you mean with that last sentence, D-M. What didn't you like last time? Besides going back to your family, what other plans do you have to keep yourself moving forward, and not back into the system's grip?

Family On My Mind

My family is in my mind. My lil' brother most 'cause I don't want him to follow my foot step, but a I know he is and I can't judge him like I was when I was a child.

-Doowop U4

From The Beat: You may not want to judge him, but do you want to guide him, to protect him from the same consequences you're now experiencing. What do you think is the most effective strategy you could employ to keep him from experiencing the criminal justice system?

Were I'm From

I am from a place called Army Street in San Francisco. I was born and raised there most of my life. I lived there until they tore them down (the projects), but when they build them back I moved back in. It's hard livin' where I'm from sometimes because you got to watch you back because you might get shot. A lot of people sell drugs around there like me. I try not to hang around there much, but it's hard. Well, that all I got to say. Write you later. Beat.

-Kizzer U4

From The Beat: We know people who live there, so we know how difficult life can be. When you're not hanging around there, where are you hanging around, and what are you doing? Do you sell drugs because you need the money and can't get it any other way, or because you want the money (there's a difference between "need" and "want")? Do you think drugs have hurt your community? How do you plan to move beyond the life you describe... and move beyond juvenile hall?

Death Dreams

What's up Beat? I'm still out here in San Francisco jail holdin' it down. What's up to my ninjas in Oakland jail? Today topic is about my dreams I have at night. At night I have dreams about getting shot in the head. I don't know why, but for some reason I can feel the pain but I never die. Nightmares are crazy.

-Too Militant U4

From The Beat: It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what this dream is trying to tell you. Is it the nightmares that are crazy, or the lifestyle you lead that's crazy?

It Is What It Is

It's funny how things happen. I think everything happens for a reason. If it's your time to go, then it's time to go. Some people think you can change your destiny. I feel no matter how much you try to change it, it's gonna be what it's gonna be.

My destiny when I get out is back to the block, and that's the business.
It's the frontline movement, so I suggest you keep it movin'...it is what it is!

-Young Casper LCRS

From The Beat: You may be right, that there is someone big time controlling everybody's destiny, but maybe not. Who or what is this being that predicts our futures? What if you're wrong and there is no overpowering entity who decides our destiny? What if it's totally on us and putting it on another being, or blaming another being for your character, behavior and fate is just a cop out? If it is up to you, what will be your first choice for your future? What's stopping you from accomplishing anything and everything you want in life?

No Evidence

What up wit' da Beat, man? What's on my mind? You know man, females, everyday life. But most of all I be thinking 'bout the future 'cause on real, even though it seem like I got life, dat ain't da case. They tryin' to get me wit da 707, but I'm still go get through 'cause they don't got no evidence that I did nothing. But I'm go hold it down till they let a thug hit da avenue, and dat's on my mama.

-Poon-G U4

From The Beat: Well, it's one thing that they don't have evidence to convict you, but it's another thing not to do it in the first place. If you beat your case, great, but then what? If you don't change up, then there'll be another case, and another, and sooner or later your luck will run out. We hope you make that change before it does.

On My Mind

I have a lot on my mind like when I'm going to get out and my family. I love my fam bam and when I wake up I thank God for another day. I think of my life and I'm out.

-Lil' D U5

From The Beat: When you think about your life when you're out, do you see yourself making any changes? The test of how much you love your family is whether you are willing to give up the things that take you away from them. If you're not willing to sacrifice whatever it is that gives the system power over your life, then you're saying you love some things more than you love your family.

Erisco

I am from a place known as Frisco, but tha people dat come around here dat ain't from tha Bay simply call it San Francisco. I live in a part dat a lotta theses sight-seeing tourists don't come to. And if they did, it wouldn't be all good for dem. If they seen tha realness of the 'hood, I already knowin' they wouldn't come back to the city. All tha murders and crimes committed throughout tha streets and all theses communities dat go unnoticed because of tha mayor not wantin' tha tourists to see tha real situation that's goin' on.

-Lil' Spitta U4

From The Beat: Here's an idea... Maybe you could develop your own "ghetto tour" for brave tourists who really do want to see what's real. You could make some money by charging these tourists for your time and guiding them, and then you could take some of that money to clean up some of what you're showing them... Well, it's just an idea.

Life's On My Mind

Every morning I wake up. I got the same thing on my mind: life! Life includes the way I live, decisions I make and made. And most important, where I'm goin' tomorrow. My dreams are on my mind. Sure I think of my boyfriends and all, but at this point of the time that's far from thought. Hopefully I see tomorrow on my mind come true.

-Sey Sey U5

From The Beat: It's up to you whether those dreams come true or not.

You're Cute

Everything about chu is cute
 You even wrote a rap about me too!
 You said you loved me, swear to God I love you too
 Your like the apple the serpent offered Adam
 and Eve
 So tempting, yet a taste could destroy
 everything
 You said ya girl's pregnant
 It's like da lord's gift
 Yet I neva understood it
 But we was always goin' at it
 Check it, it was like wakin' up
 In da morning just to be fussin' and fightin'
 You also said it was like havin' your life
 restarted
 (To be continued...)

-Lil' Bipp U5

From The Beat: We're not very fond of love letters in The Beat because they almost never say anything that's important to anyone but the writer. But you could turn this into a more meaningful piece by explaining what he meant when he said it was like having his life restarted. Maybe we'll learn more in part 2.

Still A Juvenile

Right now the most important thing on my mind is my trial next week. I have a 707, so I find out if I'm going to 850 Bryant or stay here. I hope I stay in juvenile court. I have been thinking about running from the Ranch or adult Walden House when I get out. But I find out what's up next week.

-Yung Jokes U6

From The Beat: Well, Yung Jokes, we know that you beat your 707 and are still in the juvenile system. And we also know that be thinking about running from whatever program they send you to, you are proving that the decision to treat you like a juvenile is the correct decision, because running is the act of a child. There are times — like now — when the best thing may be the most difficult thing: stand up like an adult and face the music!

What To Do

I am from the streets my black people, my mom and dad. A world without borders. Think about a world without borders that's all I know if they were to take borders and lines you could not cross I wouldn't know what to do.

-Mark D U6

From The Beat: When you try to write on all the topics, you really don't get to say anything about any of them. Next time, we want you to write on one topic, not all three, and tell us something when you write. For example, we really want to know what you mean when you say you wouldn't know what to do if there were no borders. You could write a complete paper on that topic alone. So, next time, one topic, not all three!

The Law's Limiting Borders

A world without borders! That would be a crazy world. Gangs would control cities. People would be dyin' left and right. People would have to kill in order to survive. With no police or no type of law to stop people from committing crimes we would be living very savagely. I'm speaking about borders of law.

-Smoke U6

From The Beat: The world you describe doesn't sound that different from the world we already live in. How do you think things would be if there were no geographic borders (neighborhoods, cities, states, countries), but there were still legal borders with laws and police to enforce them?

Thinking Of God In The Morning

When I wake up I think about the fact that God is still letting me live, even though I did a lot of dumb shhh in my life. God knows that I am a good person and I have some shhh to accomplish. But most of the time I think about if I'm ever gonna have kids and get married. (I don't think I'ma get married, but I hope I have kids though.) When I get out I hope I can hook up with a nice guy. I'm out.

-Sade U5

From The Beat: We hope that when you do have kids, you have prepared yourself to be the best mother you can be. That means getting your education so that you can support your children, avoiding the temptations that lead to lock-ups, and making sure you never have to leave your kids.

What's On Yo' Mind?

The things I have on my mind in the morning is, "Damn! I'm locked up!" I also think about the shhh I did that got me in this place. Yet I know that I gotta get out, so I think of positive things. I think of how I could try to have fun with everyone else so that my time would pass by faster. Free all da homies that are locked up.

-Termite U6

From The Beat: Even if the system did "free all da homies that are locked up," nothing can keep those homies (or you) from being locked up again unless you make some changes in your life. What are the positive things you think about doing that can keep you out of places like this?

Thinking About My Girlfriends

What's on my mind when I came and here calling my PO to get out of here because when I'm sleeping late night I be think about my girlfriends every day. I'm in here with my friends too, but I think that why time I think be going fast.

But I'm calling my mom so she can call my probation officer and tell him to come get me out of JJC so I can be with my family and my girlfriends.

And what's on your mind.

-No Name U7

From The Beat: Don't forget to put your name on what you write. What are you going to tell your PO when he or she asks what you plan to do when you get out? If you have no answer except, "Go home," the PO will know that you're not ready. You should come up with a plan that includes going to school, and you should be ready to sacrifice whatever it is that you like doing that gets you locked up.

You Already Know Who I Be

What it do, Beat? This Young Jeff. You already know who I be, but anyways, man, I got a few more months and I'm up outta here. But you already know it's ninjas who don't wanna see you leave, because I came from a long way up to where I'm at right now, but you know I'm not worried about it. Ninjas better step they game up, because mines is up. I laugh at some ninjas, 'cause they ain't on my level.

I was born in the shhh that I do, which is thuggin'. Everything that these ninjas be hollin' is all Ranch talk. Man, I'm telling you, shhh is irrelevant, 'cause they ain't thuggin' like I'm thuggin'. Only a witch ninja don't wanna see you make it and tell you how long you gonna live, because they life is messed up. It's not my fault ninjas ain't got what I got and ain't doin' what I do.

I'm seventeen years old and hated by a lot of ninjas, but you know what I tell ninjas who beef up the beef? I already got beef, so it's nothin' to me. Ninjas ain't on ma level. They ain't messin' wit' me. You can't kill nothin' you can't see. But I can't change the way ninjas think about me. I know what I think about ninjas, but holla back, Beat.

-Young Jeff LCERS

From The Beat: We do know you, but we'd love you to write about your young life, your childhood and the long way you've already gone through to get to the Ranch. How were you born into the shhh? No disrespect, but what makes you special? What makes you life any different from the next cat? We hear what you just wrote by many young writers, so set yourself apart, break it down, tell us something we haven't already heard!

On My Mind

In my mind is about money and how to get it. Also how to get a female in my crew 'cause I'm in JJS lost. But don't mean I ain't get my game tight. Just want to start new. Now my boy 'bout to give me a address to write, start fresh again. See what she about. I hope she a ghetto type gangsta

-Jason U6

From The Beat: You're looking for a "ghetto type" female and for ways to make money... It sounds to us like being here hasn't made much of an impression on you, and that you are determined to get more lock-up time under your belt before you move on...

Will I See Tomorrow?

What's on my mind every morning is am I going to make it to see tomorrow. You know what I mean. It's real hectic. I wander if I going to make it to see the future. I wake up wandering if I'm going to get killed in these streets.

That's it Beat. Holla at you later brah brahs

-Gully Bub U6

From The Beat: Are there things that you can do to make the possibility of seeing tomorrow more likely (or less likely)? How much are you in control of your own choices, and how much are others controlling what you do?

Lots Of Hatas Out There

Check it out, Beat. It goes like this: Man I'm tryin' to handle my business here on this Ranch, but y'all know in the world there's a lot of haters that don't want to see you make it no more. But when I touch down, I plan on makin' it with my wife and have me a baby and show my wife that I ain't gone cheat no more.

-M-Beezy LCERS

From The Beat: Good plan, M-Beezy, but why don't you first prove to your lady you're not going to play with the females behind her back before she becomes pregnant? Take some time together and let her know you plan to have a real family with her? Can you just disregard anyone who hates on you and tries to discourage you? You're pretty strong-minded. How do you plan to support your new family without getting into any illegal mess that can bring trouble and get you sent back into juvy or worse? What is your plan to stay free for your family and yourself?

Trying Not To Think

The first thing on my mind when I wake up is what I am going to do when I get out of here. Sometimes I just sit in my room and daydream about things I see myself doing, like playing football or messing with females or chilling with my ninjas. But thinking about doing shhh make me mad knowing I can't do none of the shhh I want, so I try not to think.

I try to block all dat shhh and focus on what's going on at that moment so I won't stress. But when I do think, I think about my family, about if I make it out how better thing would be for them. I think about my girl 'cause she got do what she want anyway. But other than that ain't nothing else on my mind.

-Marky-D U6

From The Beat: We understand the temptation just to shut your thinking down so you don't have to stress about your current situation. Unfortunately, without experiencing the stress that thinking might give you, it's going to be hard to move past this and into a new direction. There is no such thing as a life without consequences, so avoiding thinking about those consequences in no way prepares you for dealing with them — or, better yet, changing them. When you allow yourself to think about the future, and about how much better it will be for your family if you are free, what changes do you consider making in your life?

How I got played

When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I think about is when I'ma get out, and how I got took down. I will never forget it. I was at the group home. It was a day before my birthday, 2/21/07. My birthday was 2/22. Ninjas was like, go take you down tomorrow. I was thinking like should I get windy, but then I was like, "Nah, he ain't go take me down on my birthday."

2/22 I supposedly had court early in the morning, so I got dressed. I threw on my fresh fit Girbauds, my tee, the new J's and a caking Sean John hoodie. The administrator pop up. He like, "You go be late." So I hurry up, got dressed and shhhh.

Then we left on our way supposedly to court. So we stopped and got something to eat in Vallejo, then hopped back on the freeway on our way to YGC. We get to YGC we start walking upstairs. We get to my PO office and we talking for a lil' minute. Cuffs on me, and said, "You being detained!" Imagine that.

-Londezze U7

From The Beat: Since we have no idea what you got locked up for (you never said), we don't know if you got played or not. Are you saying you didn't do anything to give the system the power to lock you up, or that you don't think this is the fair consequence for what you did? In either case, all you can do now is finish your time and find a way to change some things about your life so that you don't have to go through this again!

Knock This Time Out

I'm at the Ranch, tryin' to knock this time out. Man, this weak ass place got me twisted, 'cause people up here be hollerin' out they mouth, but you tell them to see you on the outs, then they act like they ready, but they really not. Let's get it. I'm out ASAP.

-M-Beezy LCRS

From The Beat: A whole lot of guys complain about others fronting, bragging, blabbing all the time. If you take their talk all seriously, then it can drive you nuts, but if you just ignore it or answer it with humor and blow it off, then it dies there. Can you just leave the bull alone or show them by example how they can be young men without fronting?

Food

I love food if it's good Viet food, Chinese, Mexican, Italian, Japanese, Korean food are all good. The day I get out I'm going to eat all these foods. Pho (Viet), shrimp beef, ribs (Chinese), burritos, tacos, nachos (Mexican), Alfredo pesto (Italian), sushi (Japanese), and Kim chee (Korean). Well, that's all. Catch you later.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: We're on the outs and still you're making us hungry. But, for real, the Ranch food is really good—fried chicken, roast beef, greens, corn bread, green salad, fish, green beans, etc. So we hope you enjoy the new foods you are being exposed to down there, too! Then again, we bet this food gets old quick.

Getting Out Of Here Is On My Mind

The thing that's on my mind is me getting out of here. Another thing that's on my mind is my sister and my mom. I can't wait until get out so I can get to hug them and tell them how much I miss them, that I'm so glad to be out with my freedom back. The first that's on my mind every morning is my court date, because every time it comes to mind, I think of them even more.

-Gregory U5

From The Beat: It's good to think about how much you love your mom and sister, and how much you want to be back with them. Don't forget how much you missed them when you were out so you don't fall into old habits and temptations that can lead you back here. It's easy to say, "I love you," but the way to show them how much you love them is to stop giving power to the system to take you from them.

A Lot On My Mind

A lot on my mind from good to bad. It's strange how you can change, from happy to sad. I then went from home-cook meals to jailhouse food. I'm used to laying with my girl. Now I'm laying near dude.

-Trouble Makers U7

From The Beat: It sounds like you sacrificed a lot of good things when you came here. So, what "bad" things will you have to sacrifice (give up) when you're back on the outs so you can stay back on the outs?

Ranch Time

What's up with The Beat? It's ya boy, Gf Baby, and I'm at the Ranch. I been coo', though. It's better than YGC, but it's still not home. I get out January 31, 2008, but time fly by fast here. If I keep going at this rate, I'll be home in no time. Keep ya head up. I'm out.

-Gf Baby

From The Beat: You have a good attitude about being down at the Ranch. It sounds like you're minding your business, doing your program. We hope all works out for you and you will be home in no time.

Back ASAP

What it do, Beat? This ya boy, M-Beezy, holding it down, almost out of here, ya dig? But, yeah, man. I'm about to touch down ASAP, back to the streets where I belong. If anybody know me, they know where I be, so when I touch down, holla at yo' boy, M-Beezy. But, chea, I'm about to be out there, doing my thang, man, me and my wife, ya dig? Me and her doing it real big. I'm almost out, so holla at cha boy, ya heard me?

-M-Beezy LCRS

From The Beat: Why do you belong in the streets? The streets may be glamorous, full of drama, but they can get you in deep trouble and dead. Where else in the world do you feel you belong beyond the streets? Do you expect to be in the streets when you're thirty? When you think about being old and still hanging on the block, what do you look like? Feel like? Are you old? Fitted? Wounded? Rich? On your game? Dead? Will your children be following you into the streets?

First Thing On My Mind

Man, the first thing on my mind when I wake up in the morning is, when am I getting out this place? The reason why I think about that when I wake up is because they was trying to send me to the Y. And now that I beat my case, I'm in here just waiting to go to my group home.

While I'm in here, I be thinking about my unborn kid 'cause while I'm in here, I be laying in my bed like I'm really gonna change when I come home. But as I think about it, now that I got a baby on the way, I'm not gonna be on the block as much 'cause I got a kid to take care of.

That's all I got to say.

-Lil' Junk U2

From The Beat: We hope that this is really the case! There are too many babies out there from young people who may not really be ready for the full responsibilities of being a parent. Since you "beat your case," are you going to make the most of this opportunity? It's not just about you anymore, it's about that little innocent child that didn't ask to be brought into this world. Think very carefully when you say you won't be spending "as much" time on the block as before, because any time on the block can quickly end in you being taken from that child that you are responsible for. What the child needs is not promises or words of love, but the actual presence of a father in his or her life. Please step up to the plate and take care of yours!

Weak

What's sup with The Beat Within? This your boy Donald. I be thinkin' about getting out. That is it! It is your boy birthday today. It is weak is hell.

-Donald U7

From The Beat: Yeah, it would be weak to spend your birthday in jail. But this piece is pretty weak itself. I sure doesn't tell us very much. When you're thinking about getting out, are you thinking about doing anything different so that you don't have to do the same consequences? Like what?

Missing You

I miss my wife. Man, I can't wait to touch down to her and let her know what's really good wit' M-Beezy.

To all in the hall, stay up. If y'all know me, y'all know I'm about to touch down in a minute, so y'all come see me. Man, let's get it. We gone make it. Time is money and we missing out right now. I'm out. M-Beezy. Let's get it.

-M-Beezy LCRS

From The Beat: It sounds like you intend to go straight back to the block when you get out. If you do, don't you risk your plans for your wife and family, your freedom? If you wanted to, do you think you could make it in the "legit" world? If so, how would you start with a "real" job? Do you have enough confidence in the world beyond the block to believe that you could develop a real, successful life in it?

Doing Us

M-Beezy: What it do, bra?

G-Baby: What's with my big bra?

M-Beezy: Shhh, you know me, tryin' to knock this shhh out an' hit the block, ASAP.

G-Baby: Me, I'm just counting the days down until I'm back with the thugs.

M-Beezy: Man, I hear you, my ninja. Let's knock this shhh out and ball out when we touch down. Let's get it! Woop! Woop!

G-Baby: I feel you. Let's take this one day at a time, ya heard me? Woop! Woop!

J-Stub: What's up with M-Beezy? Man, I'm just tryna get out and do me.

G-Baby: Man, I feel you, 'cause if we all did us, we wouldn't be here right now.

LG: Shhh, tryna knock this time out.

M-Beezy: Man, lil' bra, don't even trip. Man, we all 'bout to touch down, bra. Time goes by. They can't keep real ninjas down, ya heard me?

-M-Beezy, G-Baby, J-Stub LCRS

From The Beat: All three of you are going back to the streets to set yourselves up for yet another fall? This makes absolutely no sense. We hope in several years we'll see you free handling your business and not locked up or dead.

The Longest Story Ever

Once upon a time...The End.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: You're a good storyteller.

A World Without Borders

A world without borders will be negative and positive at the same time. A positive point of view without borders can be no worries about sets, turfs. It probably will not be chaos over where you're from, but family. Families will get into conflicts over respect or people hating.

The negative point of view about no borders can be, people getting lost. There won't be location or destination for people to go. I also think a whole lot of people will get lost.

-C-Moore U6

From The Beat: So you think that borders give people direction and a sense of belonging? That's an interesting point of view. Are there some borders you would like to cross?

I See Everything Passing By

When I wake up in the morning, I see everything passing by. How's my mom doing? How's everyone doing? What can I do while I'm stuck in here? All I can do is mourn as I watch time go by slowly. I think every morning, when am I going to leave this place? I think about what might happen when I get out. Lawyers say I'll be out soon. I doubt that I will with this suspense I feel. I think about my life and think about how I'm going to improve. That's only in the morning when I wake up.

-Charles U2

From The Beat: Those are a lot of thoughts for just waking up. There's really nothing you can physically do while you're locked up. There's a lot of mental things you can do however. What have you come up with for some ways to "improve?" What do you want to happen when you get out — and how are you going to make it happen? Are you tired of "watching time go by?" If so, what are going to do about it?

Stand Tall

Damn! My past life is all dat I'm seein'. Thinkin' 'bout my childhood and my careless life. Damn, I wanna go back in time and be a little kid again. I had no worries, no responsibilities. I had a happy childhood.

People say weed is harmless. I used to agree. Now that I look back, ever since 11 when I first smoked, my life changed. I started rebellin', failin', smokin', chokin', thizzin' an' jizzin'. I was tryna stock up, but now I'm locked up.

Tryna figure out
What my future 'bout
I used to live on trout
At tripog cousin
Started to scream an' shout
Cussin' an' fussin'
I used ta drink ber
Now I'm over her
Thinking 'bout her
I don't know wer
I'm finna be y'all
I hope I'm out the hall
Standin' really tall

-Abbasinian Butter U6

From The Beat: First, we really can't honor your request that we make no spelling corrections. For example, the very first word of your piece you misspelled as "Dam." But that is a real word, and it means something very different from the word you wanted, which is "Damn." So we changed it. Another example is that you wrote "know" when you meant "now," so we changed that, too. And that's just the way The Beat operates. We'll try to keep your spelling when it makes no difference if you got it right or wrong, but when it does make a difference, we'll make the change. As for your message, we admire the fact that from your more adult point of view, you are able to conclude that smoking weed from age 11 hasn't done anything to help your life, but has truly complicated it. And while it might be nice to go back to childhood for a minute, it wouldn't be so nice to have to relive all the negative things that came from your child decisions. So, we hope you take your regrets and refashion a different future. You can do what you set out to do. It may take time, but it will be worth the effort.

We Do Our Own Thing

Take off your brim
A moment of silence
For my big bra, D-Tro
Frontin' round here
Will get you back
Dropped off
We do our own things
We don't act like y'all
I say back white walls
Wit' the back wiped off
Just a shy write off
I'm a stunna
We guys not the type
That fall
We don't breed them kind
But they bleed just fine
Yup. Stubba the one
Read between the lines

-J-Stubba LCRS

From The Beat: We're trying to read between the lines, but we're not sure what this is about. Your homie died, but what happened? How do you go from showing him respect to writing about people fronting?

The Ranch Is Coo' But It's Not Home

What it do, Beat? It's ya boy, G-Baby. I been up here at the Ranch for a few months and it's coo', but it's not home, you feel me?

-G-baby LCRS

From The Beat: No it's not home. What are you going to do to get back home and never leave it? Ready or not?

Alcohol And Tobacco On My Mind

What's on my mind is a pack of Marlboros Red and a 6-pack of beer and my case.

-White Crane U6

From The Beat: Maybe the reason you picked up a case is because what's on your mind doesn't really do you any good at all. If this is all that's on your mind, maybe you don't really need a mind at all...

My Mind's Playing Tricks On Me

The first thing that's on my mind is, "Damn! I just had a dream I was at home and it felt so damn good." And to tell you the truth, I'm sick of having it because my mind is playing tricks on me. I'm sick of it 'cause no matter how much I laugh and smile and it looks like I'm having a good time, it's just a cover up for the moment that I'm really feeling like a bunch of shhh.

-Young Mike U4

From The Beat: What you describe as "the truth" truly is only a truth for "the moment." Don't confuse this moment of pain with the rest of your life, which can turn a corner tomorrow, if that's what you want. What would help you the most to make this dream come true, and then to keep it true by never giving up your freedom again?

No Borders

A world with no borders will make a world a better place, because we could just hop in a car and explore. I think that could decrease the crime rate, because we won't feel no restrictions, so if we really have a problem, we could go explore to get things out of our minds. There will still be government and laws, but no restrictions, no borders.

-Lifer LCRS

From The Beat: Very interesting idea. And you're right—sometimes when you just take off and explore the rest of the world, it can show you amazing new ways of living you'd never imagine, and you can gain new perspectives on your own world and your choices.

Back Again

What's up, Beat? It's your boy, Stub, an' I am in the Ranch right now, but the good thing is, I am down until (a few) weeks, to be back home again, but this time I'm gone do everything the right way.

I am sick of getting locked up and being away from my loved ones.

These people don't love me—all they doing is making money on me. But I am grown now, so I can think for myself. So I am gone go home in' get off of paper work and do the right thing, an' stay out of jail.

-J Stub LCRS

From The Beat: It sounds like you've decided you've had enough of all incarceration, and that's all good. Sometimes it takes a minute to realize that doing whatever you do on the outs will keep you locked up as long as you do it. What can you do on the outs to make some money, even if it's small money at first—at least it can be legal cash, to keep yourself together?

Happy Thoughts

What makes me happy is being free, being with my loved ones.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: If being free makes you so happy, why do you come up to the halls and now to the Ranch? What's really going on in your life on the outs? Why aren't you home with your loved ones?

What's On My Mind

Man, what's up with da Beat, man? Shhh, it's about dat time fo me to get out dis thang tomorrow, ya dig. 'Cause a thug like me been in here fo' too long, ya dig. But dis ya boy Daddy-O, and I'm out.

-Daddy-O U4

From The Beat: You mean, you've been in here all this time, and the most you could give us was four short sentences? We hope you put more effort into staying free than you put into this. So, are you out of here? How's it going

Weak

It's your boy, J-Stub. Can't wait to get out of here. This is weak. Young homies, you don't want to come up here, but stay up. Never let them make you stay down.

J-Stub LCRS

From The Beat: J-Stub, since you write that the Ranch is weak, why don't you write The Beat about the programs you think might really help the young men at the Ranch, especially since they're now going to spend a year down there? If you ran the Ranch, how would you improve it?

Hey, Hey

What it do? I'm up here, getting this time over with, for I can go home and show the people that said I can't do it, that I can if I want to. But, y'all have to do the right thing and get y'all time over with. Y'all really not missing shhh on the block right now. Look at it like this--do yo' time now and you will have nothing to worry about. You don't have to keep running. It's time to sit down an' get this over wit'. Y'all know what's up.

J-Stub LCRS

From The Beat: Terrific advice for the young ones and for yourself, J-Stub. Yes, you have an independent mind and a lot of mental strength, so we hope you use it all when you're out to create a new life for yourself. Now that you've been away from the drama of the block for a while, could you imagine living without it? If the young ones are listening to you and following your example, we hope you develop a beautiful, successful life in a legal way, for your own self as well as for the youngstas.

L.C.R.

The Ranch is cool. My day runs by pretty quick, but the workout is crazy! It a Ranch, not no boot camp. Well, yeah, I got many months left 'til you will see me in the streets. Take care.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Your daily exercise routine down at the Ranch is brutal, Lil' Eric. You have our hearts. But soon you'll be real buff and healthy, so it may be all good—enjoy those burns! Beauty hurts!

Who You Mad At?

I am mad at myself for all the mistakes I made.
I don't like to really get mad.
I get even or I prove them wrong.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Getting mad, even at yourself, isn't the worst thing in the world, as long as you learn from any mess you get yourself into. But can't getting even get you into some more trouble? Now, proving someone wrong can be a great idea. Can you give The Beat an example?

An Unfinished Puzzle

I don't look at life like a puzzle--it doesn't make sense. I look at life as a drawing with no eraser, 'cause if you mess up, you gotta find a way to fix it. I've made a lot of mistakes, but there is always a way to fix it.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Interesting idea, Lil' Eric, but why does your drawing come with no eraser? If you can't erase your mistakes, how can you fix them? What can you redraw in life and what can't you? What mistakes have you made so far in your young life, and how have you corrected them?

Love

Love is love
Love is your wife
Love is me
Love is you
Love is some good weed
So, love

-Weather Man LCRS

From The Beat: Love is all good. What is your life that you love on the outs like? Let us know specifically what you love about your life.

Gone

I'm about to be here for a long time. I'm even gonna miss my son's second birthday, which will be on December 30th, but I'm a try my hardest to knock this out.

I'm a calm person, so, hopefully, that helps me not to catch dead time. I'm a get my GED and take some carpentry, so when I get out, I can get a job. But I'm a miss my son!

-Baby Chino LCRS

From The Beat: Enjoying and learning whatever you can while you're down at the Ranch is a terrific idea! Keep us posted!

Having A Kid

Having a kid
My homies had one
I just had one
But she said
She don't know if it is mine
Or T's
He can have it
'Cause he have three
Don't have kids

-Weather Man LCRS

From The Beat: We changed the name of the father in your piece, Weather Man, but we want to know how you really feel about fathering a child some day? Are you looking forward to it? Scared? Overwhelmed? Excited? Let us know through your writing! In the end, we hope you are a long way from having a child.

I Could Send You Shivers

Girl, I could get as deep as it goes
Send shivers from the nape of your neck
To the base of your toes
Come on girl, get close
Put my hand in the small of your back
When you start to walk
I love the way it just swang
It's a beautiful thang
When you do what you do
When my homeboys ask
I'll tell 'em
You more than just my boo

-Young Ant LCRS

From The Beat: We had to cut some of the more sensuous parts of your poem, sorry, Young Ant. They may be beautiful but they're inappropriate for The Beat. Please keep writing your really imaginative, original poems for us. We'll work with them and get them published for you!

What's On Your Mind

The first thing I think of in the morning is my family, and how they are doing — who is up and who is asleep, what they are doing. I think about them every second of the day, and when I'm going home.

-Lil' Seany U3

From The Beat: It's too bad you didn't give them as much thought when you were free, because if you had thought of how much you love them, you wouldn't have done whatever it was that gave the system the power to take you away from them.

I Am From...

Me, I'm from Cambodia. Yup, I'm glad to be Cambodian because you don't see too much Cambodians. But you know where to find us in the Tenderloin. Yea, in Cambodia back in the days, it was crazy. I can't even explain. I want to go to Cambodia!

-JS U2

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing where you are from. Where do you get the history of where you're from? Do your parents and other family members share their experiences with you? Do you read books about your homeland? Does hearing stories make you want to go visit even more? We've been to Cambodia and we know it is a very beautiful country with beautiful people. But it also has a very violent past which is what the movie, 'The Killing Fields' is about.

Happy Thoughts

What makes me happy is what's waiting for me at home--all my family and friends and the places I miss going, make me happy thinkin' 'bout them. I miss the City. Man!

-Frank LCRS

From The Beat: Home may make you happy, Frank, but here you are at the Ranch. What's messing with you on the outs that brings you to the Ranch? What do you do throughout San Francisco when you're free? Where do you like to go and do?

When Am I Going...

The first thing that hit my mind in the morning while I'm in here is when am I going to see a day free for myself, and when am I going to stop making the same mistakes.

-Ant U2

From The Beat: We believe the person who holds the answer to those questions is yourself. What you want won't happen unless you put some work into achieving it. So now that you know it's on you, what are you willing to do about it? Do you continue to just think about it, or will there be some action with those thoughts? Do you think your family has been asking themselves the same questions?

Bored

Don't you just hate when you're so bored? Time runs by so fast! Over here, sometimes I get bored. I just wish I can sleep through it--read a book, do something, instead sit there.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: What would stimulate you move you to do something productive? Pick up a book! Write! Exercise! Sign up for a program! Leave the chilling, it's a huge waste of time.

Always On My Mind

When I wake up I always got the same thing on my mind. The thing on my mind is this girl. I can't get her out my head, and I don't know what it is about her.

I'm currently in a relationship, an' I have been thinking about the girl since I came to Juvenile Hall. That's on my mind.

-Jungle U6

From The Beat: First of all, we don't allow hate words in The Beat, which is why you won't find the words you used in this piece. If you can't respect the girl, then respect The Beat. But second, why don't you tell us something about her so we'll understand why she's always on your mind.

Gangstas

Where do most gangsters end up? Dead or in jail. Why do people think they're so gangster, when all they do is complain, whine in jail? I think that's fake.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Where do you think gangstas end up? Dead, in jail, in wheel chairs, homeless, strung out, in the welfare line, uneducated to name a few besides what you named. And what you think is fake may not be fake to others. By the way, jails are notorious for being big ol' soap operas full of complaining and hating. Why go?

Hair

How's your hair?
Is it long, short
Is it wavy, straight?
How's your hair?

-Lil' V LCRS

From The Beat: What do you think about someone, maybe someone you don't know, based upon how you like his or her hair, Lil' V? You wear your hair lots of ways. Which style do you like best on your own head? How's your hair?

Almost Home

What's up? This Lil' Gambino. I'm here at the Ranch. I've been here for over a year, but I'm ups like in two more months. It's nothin' to a real boss, man. Still holding it down like we always do. We do the time, the time don't do us. To all in the halls and CYA--y'all keep your heads, stay cool, so you could get back to y'all loved ones.

-Lil' Gambino LCRS

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing boss! Next time write something a bit more meaningful for all of us to embrace not just for you and a few.

I Want To Be Free

I want to be free from the system, living in the free world.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: You write that you want to be free, but if so, why do you keep messing up?

Time

How do you want to spend your time? Free or in jail? Or dead?

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: How would you answer your own question? Wisely or stupidly?

Am I Mad At?

I'm mad at myself, 'cause I was doing hella good and I messed up trying to go to a party. I should have listened to my mom when she said to go home. Now I'm in the halls, facing a year in placement.

-J Skrilla

From The Beat: Wow! That is one party you should have passed up. You don't mention what happened at that party, but that's what you should examine while you're locked up. What went down that you could have prevented? What would be the lesson from this experience, besides respecting mom?

I Wish I Was Home

When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I think about is how cold it is and that I'm still in this goddamn place. I wish I was home.

-Arianna

From The Beat: Juvy can be cold—maybe because when you wrote this it was end of winter, and maybe because you may feel that the people in juvy are impersonal. Will you remember the chill in juvy when you're home again? Will that memory keep you out of any mess?

Mad At My PO

Who I'm mad at is my PO and the police for bringing me here, and my PO for trying to send me to placement, but if I get out, I ain't coming back and making them happy, because all they want to do is to send me to placement. They ain't trying to help no one, they just wanna make money. But if I get out, I'm a be smarter out, 'bout the stuff I do.

-Charliz

From The Beat: We're not saying that anybody's motives are all pure, even your PO's, but he/she doesn't earn any more money for sending you to placement than they would if they sent you home. If you're really smart and really want to frustrate the authorities, stop messing up when you're free again. Get yourself off their radar for good! Living well (and free) is the best revenge!

Family

What's good, Beat? It's time for me to write, but right now I have a lot on my mind, especially my family. They really love me and care for me. When I'm down or up, they be there for me, so I appreciate my family and hope they forgive me. I'll be out soon. 'Til then, pray for me. One love.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: You sound like you recognize the wonderful and supportive family you have. So when you're free again, how can you show them how much you appreciate their support? Can you show them while incarcerated?

Song Theme

Valentine
What does it really mean?
It means

It's a day when people just get hurt
They get fooled
Thinking they in love
It's just bullshhh
Lol

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: What makes you think people who give each other flowers and candy, take them out to dinner, on Valentine's Day really don't love each other? Just because that day isn't a special day for you, it doesn't mean it is not special to them. Why are you speaking for everybody? Why don't you like that day?

Keeping It Real

I'm a keep it real, man, life is all cool. For right now, I'm waiting for my release date.

I've been through a lot since I've been in here in juvenile. My grandfather died, my mother goin' through a situation including myself, but that's all really—I'm handling it really well, just to keep it real.

-Jayleon

From The Beat: You have our hearts for losing your grandfather. It must be even harder and sadder to accept that he died while you were in juvy, because you couldn't be there for him or your family in person. Once you're free again, can you help your mother out? Staying out of trouble may be the best help you can give her. Can you go back to school, and succeed on probation? If you want it you can!

I Think About My Girl First Thing

The first thing that's on my mind when I wake up is my girl and my homeboys and my family.

I remember going to the store with my mom; then, the next day, we got in an argument; then, at school, the police came and they brought me here for violating probation.

-Young man

From The Beat: You have a whole lot on your mind. Have you called or written your mom to settle your argument, maybe apologize for your part in it? What's up with your violating probation? What's the plan when you're free again?

Who I'm Mad At

I'm mad at myself. It isn't anyone's fault but mine that I'm in here. I put myself through this and now I have to get myself out. So if you ask me who I'm mad, I think I'll reply and say, "myself."

-Young Smack

From The Beat: Accepting responsibility for what you do shows you're growing up, and it's a start toward not messing up again. At the moment you're tempted to mess up in the future, will you remember to tell yourself, "This decision's entirely on you? Do you really want to risk your freedom over this?" When that moment happens, what will you answer yourself?

If I Change, Life Would Not Be Fun

I have thought about changing more than once, but at the end it is just too much work, even though I know that in the long run it's going to help me do better and stay out of trouble. If I decide to do that, then life would not be fun.

-Antonio

From The Beat: Then, your decision will always bring you back in here until you get the point. Don't let life hurt you so bad for something that you can prevent right now. Are you still down? How do you feel about the consequences you're now paying for your fun? Was it worth it? What do you also think is fun, that's also legal?

Change My Life

I want to change my life, because I'm tired of gangbanging. The other reason I want to change my life is because I'm the older one in my family, and I want to go back to school and get an education, because I want to help my mom and my sisters.

-Luis

From The Beat: Good idea. You sound like you know your younger brothers and sisters may be looking up to you and watching how you manage in the world. So if you're in the streets, they may be more likely to go there, too. If you go to school, they may follow your example. Isn't that the best way you can help your lil' bros and sisses? And you know you need that education, for your own sake, too!

Mad

Who am I mad at?

The dead for dying
Europe for being so far away
The reasons for being right
Fruity pebble punk rock
For going so hard
Why what makes me mad
Makes me just as happy
Like a fast Nascar hyphy fifteen
Peanut butter with milk
At two o'clock in the morning
On the hotline with my boo
But my homie be on the phone with me, too!

-Dexter

From The Beat: You start out with an amazing couple of lines, but then it turns to have a different meaning. What are you trying to express? How hurt you are because of those who have left this world? What? One suggestion: be careful with the things you mess with. It could be very dangerous. You know what we mean.

Since I Came Here, I Was Messed Up

My whole life has changed since I came here. Then I knew since I came here, I was messed up.

-Jumac

From The Beat: It looks like you didn't have the chance to finish this piece. How has your life changed since you came to juvy?

Waiting On The Keys To Set Me Free

When I wake up in the morning, I think about when the keys is going to come to let me free.

-Deric

From The Beat: Almost everybody in juvy thinks about being free. How will you keep yourself out of any mess and out of juvy, once you're outside again?

Madness

Man, who I'm mad at? I bet there's a lot of people I'm mad at me. I'm mad at my PO. I got played, 'cause I shouldn't have even got locked up, 'cause I missed a day of school that I didn't even know I had, 'cause my PO didn't tell me, so forget a PO. Oh, boy.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: WE bet there's more to the story than you lead on. Keep it real! Remember, not going to school is a violation of the law, and even your parents can get into trouble. If you feel like you've been played, then let the judge know, let your PO know how you feel so they can break it down for you if that's what you need! Use your voice!

Given A Break

I remember when I've been given a break by the police, when I was throwing rocks at cars while I was on probation. When I threw the rock at the car, he (the driver) called the police on me. Then the police came and asked me what my name was, and I said, "Gregory." Then he looked up my name in the computer and asked me am I on probation, and I said, "Yes." Then he said, "Okay, I'm going give you a break this time, but if I get another call because you're throwing rocks at cars, I'm going to arrest you and take you in." I felt surprised when I heard the officer, went back and did the same thing, but didn't get caught that time.

-Gregory

From The Beat: Gregory, what's up with you? It's not even so much that throwing rocks is illegal, it's way dangerous. What happens if you hit the car's windshield, scare and distract the driver, and he steers into another car, a bridge divide, etc.? His and anybody else's injuries or deaths are on you. What if something like this had happened? In what type of situation do you think you might be in? Wake up!

I Am From

I am from San Rafael, the Bunky City. Lol. Just kidding. I'm from California. Born in Marin General Hospital, but raised in San Rafael for fifteen years. Always movin' when I was lil', but now we stay in San Rafael, my 'hood, my city—crazy San Rafael.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Tell us more about your life in San Rafael? What's special about it? What do you do for adventure? Why did you move around a lot? Where did you hangout? Is it a good play for a kid?

At First She Was Shy

I met her one day—I was at my friend's house. She came in the door. She was smilin' at me, bustin' jokes about these fake rappers and stuff, got close to me, feelin' me, tellin' me I'm funny. Then it turned into a relationship. It's about a girl. She's really special to me. Every time I see her I fall into a daze, like I'm in a dream. Every time she speak to me, she got that coo' little voice that make you wanna just grab and oooooohhh.

She's quiet, but every time she get around me, she starts laughin'. She's real dark skinned, four to five inches taller than me. She has a nice Coke-bottle shape. She comes here every Saturday in some nice little spandex pants. She got on her Victoria Secret Catalogue perfume an' Page 5 type top and bottom. Now that's how our relationship is gonna keep on going.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: Time to wake up before you close her. No one, shall we say that again, no one wants a boy/girl friend that is locked up and not taking their life seriously. So when you're out again, how are you going to make sure you stay free, so you can be with her and keep your side of your relationship flourishing?

First Thing In The Damn Mornin'

The first thing that I think of when I wake up in the morning, is, "Damn, it's freezin' cold. I want my regular clothes." They make us wear shorts to sleep.

I hate the halls. I wanna go home. Damn, we gotta mop and sweep our floor every morning. Damn, I wanna go home.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: That's real. What are you missing most from your regular life? Was doing whatever brought you into juvy worth it? Are you learning any homemaking skills in juvy, like mopping the floors, that you didn't already know before you were sent inside? Or is the best lesson juvy has taught you that you never want to go back there again?

I'm Sorry I Dissed My Mom

I want to tell my mom I'm sorry for disrespecting her and cussin' at her. And I want to tell her that I love her very much.

-Olvas

From The Beat: Why don't you call or write her from juvy and tell her you're sorry? You both will probably feel a lot better about your argument if you do.

This Year's Supposed To Be The Best Valentine's Day

First of all, this year this Valentine's Day was supposed do be the best Valentine's Day of my life. I wish I was in the outs wit' my girl baby.

-Blake

From The Beat: Just make sure you stay out for the next one. As for right now focus on your situation and how to make it better.

I Missed The NBA All Star Basketball Game In Vegas

Who I'm mad at? My PO, 'cause she could have let me out last week, before All Star weekend. I would have been the fool in All Stars in Vegas, in the 18 and older clubs.

-Fat Josh

From The Beat: Too bad that you couldn't make it. For the next one, make sure you do your things right, so you won't have to depend on another person's decision. Can that be possible? The only person you can blame for your situation is you! So don't point the finger at your PO, it is you that

I Might Move To Washington, DC

Man, I'm hella mad, because they're keeping me 'til March 28th, and I don't know what's gonna happen. I might go to placement or move to Washington, DC. But to all, keep your heads up.

-Leaving soon

From The Beat: It can be worrisome not knowing what's going to happen to you in the future, especially when you have little control over it. What do you hope happens? Who lives in Washington, DC? How do you feel about starting your life over there? What is your plan?

Just Me!

See, I have a lot anger that I won't let go I keep feelings to myself that I won't show I go hyphy at a party and go dumb Opei way Keeping a fresh white T

Losing to Grandpa on Super Bowl day But all that is all fact—something in a dream

If you don't know what I mean

I want to turn over dirty to clean

I'm going to end this about right now

To release mah frown from upside down

I don't even know much what to say

I'm a black lil' ninja

Ready to go back to my usual thang

-Lil' Opei

From The Beat: Even and/or especially if your anger is righteous, it's hurting you, so why don't you examine it, even if you just do it in your own mind? Or write to The Beat about what's keeping you in pain, or talk to someone you trust? Is it pride, confusion, depression that causes you to keep your anger to yourself? Since you mentioned it, it seems like you might be ready to deal with it, so we hope you get any help you need.

Happy Thoughts To Bee

Right now I'm thinking of a place just for me

With money, and my family

Up in a cute house with pets and green

When I grow up, watch

This ain't gonna be just a thought

It's gonna be reality

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Beautiful dreams. Now is your chance to build up the experience, education and talents you have and are going to need to acquire those dreams! What interests, goals and skills do you have that you can develop to earn everything you fantasize about? You can earn them all!

A Change In Life

What's up? This Young Looney and I'm chillin', or shall I say crazy in Marin Juvenile Hall. I am changing my life around because this ain't life.

-Brian

From The Beat: Good thinking! It was about time? And how are you going to do that? What's on your mind?

I'm Down 'Cause I'm Locked Up

If I was a soundtrack, my theme song would be "I've Been Down" my Mac Dre. Why? Because I'm down, 'cause I'm locked up and I can't do anything about it.

-Thizzle

From The Beat: Is there song about freedom in which you can relate in the future?

Hustling Ain't Worth It

This is your boy, Marcos, in MCJH, and it ain't worth hustling because you end up dying or in juvenile hall for hella long. I'm in for just to put some money in my pocket. It's just not worth it.

-Marcos

From The Beat: It's great that you've already learned that hustling is almost always self-defeating. So can you get yourself a "real" job, even if at first it may not pay too much, get some experience, establish a good record, so you can work your way into a job or career you'd enjoy? We hope so. That's the only legit way we all have to go through.

Queen Bee

What' good? This' yo' girl, Queen Bee.

A true clime piece

Honesty, beautiful Bee

I'm a queen

Yadadimean?

Listenin' to Mac Dre

The "Bay shhhh"

Stayin' in trouble

Wanna get out the halls

Stay out them bars

When I get older

When I'm out

I'm gonna be on top

Makin' my dough

Gettin' my stuff

Well, that's it

I'm out—back to the halls

Time to be out

Well, bye, gots to go

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: This piece may be righteous about how you feel about making your money, Queen Bee, but if you're "making your dough" illegally, as this piece implies, what will keep you from getting arrested and sent straight back to juvy and/or to a group home, etc? How can you "get on top" with your skills, talents and interests in a legal way?

Boss Of The Bay

I'm from California, Marin City, aka The Jungle. I was born in Marin County.

-Marin resident

From The Beat: Now tell us about your life in Marin!

You Wastin' My Time, You Wastin' My Money

Time is money, and that's all I gotta say. It's official. You wastin' my time, you wastin' my money.

-Baby Face

From The Beat: Read what you just wrote. It's almost like you're saying that your time is for sale, as in "You got the money, I got the time." What about your family, your friends? Do you charge them to hang out with them? Lastly, look where you sit tonight, wasting plenty of time. Ha! Wake up and live right!

MICHAEL MCKINNEY This next writer sent us an enormous amount of poetry within three different letters and we're just catching up to it all now. With some of the poetry, "I Can Feel Your Pain, Things Generated From Inside Of Self, and My Love For You" are all examples, he uses repetition as a way to convey the force and passion he shares with those particular statements. It's also very apparent that God is a huge part of his life right now and we're sure that because he now believes in a higher power, situations and struggles are easier to cope with. He starts off with a tribute to his mother and it's one of the most beautiful poems to a mother we've read in a long time. It's raw and from the heart. His "run-on" way of writing gives the piece a good effect because it shows the reader that he didn't prepare this like a speech, but rather he's "winging it" and speaking straight from his soul. That's exactly the same thing good mothers do when they speak to their children. From "Enduring The Struggle" to giving "Inmate Prayers" we can tell that this man has a gigantic heart. Now it bleeds through our pages and onto y'all. He's writing from a Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida.

To My Mother

Mother I cannot turn back the hands of time.
But you are one mother I will always keep in mind
Your love and you have always stood by me through my
hardest times. Your love embraced me when love was hard to
find,
And to me my dear mother you will always be one of a kind,
And mother unto this day I will love you all the time.
And mother when you saw my mind was troubled
And my action was getting out of control,
You kept giving all your love to me until better days unfold
And you kept your loving arms open to me

Even when the years went to taking they toll.
And the love you have always showed me will never grow old.
And you are my number one mother, as it will always be told.
I love you sweet mother cause your ways are like a rose.

Enduring The Struggle

Times are hard but I must be a man
In the struggle and pain is something I must be able to stand.
Enduring the struggle with all I can
My heart and mind have been conditioned to take it
And it's a must that I will make it.
I will keep enduring the struggle with out ever trying to fake it.
Enduring the struggle being the best I could be
Is the only way I know how to make it.
'Cause fakers don't last in the struggle.
They fall to the wayside like no other.
Enduring the struggle is what life is all about so in this struggle
You must not give up.
And the struggle is where the strongest of mans
Should take the hardest stands.
Enduring the struggle with an everlasting hand.
And when the going gets rough and the struggle gets tough
I must keep on striving and never give up.
Enduing the struggle is what many others have done way before
my time.
So enduring the struggle is not one of a kind.
Many leaders of all race and color
Who have stood up in the struggle
Through the worst of times
And endured the struggle with a very strong mind.
And they never left the struggle until they was dead and gone
And right now today they name are still carrying on.
And I will keep enduring the struggle 'cause I have made it my
home
And in this struggle I sometimes feel the need to quit
That's when I push myself with every lil' bit
Of will power that I have within
'Cause in this struggle I will never bend.
I will keep up my sight to the very last end.
And me and the struggle will always be the best of friends.
'Cause we can relate to each other
'Cause me and the struggle can't live without one another.
While enduring struggle I have learned to be humble and at peace,
So in the struggle I will not be wiped off my feet.
Enduring the struggle is no fun and games.
But I must keep enduring until I love the pain.

Things Generated From The Inside Of Self

If one just start taking sometime out to look inside themselves we would come to learn and realize that so much love, so many skills and potential are right there on the inside of self. The true self has so much meaning on the inside. But when always looking on the outside of self for answers and a way to live, and this only allows one to consistently take away from our self each day. Not wanting to look on the inside of self. And make changes within themselves for the better. Therefore if one wants to be loved, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If one wants some peace and harmony and tranquility look inside self it's right there. If one's looking for some understanding look on the inside of self it's right here. If you are looking for some respect look on the inside of self its right. If you are looking for something beautiful, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for someone caring and sharing, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If one want some kindness, look inside of self. It's right there. If one are looking for some grace look on the inside of self its right there. If you are looking for some wholeness look on the inside of self. It's right here. If you are looking for a deeper connection, look on the inside of self. It's right there.

If you are looking for some honesty look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some courage look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some spirituality look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for ways to live in reality of the truth just look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some intelligence look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some balance look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some true identity look on the inside of self. It's right there.

What's on the inside of self are much greater than the outside self-image and the things of the world. And the more one looks on the inside of one self, the less hard one would have to struggle to make one life more and more beautiful. And now days there are not many people in this world who takes the time out to look or realize that all these things and so much more sit right on the inside of self. If one wants to go somewhere that's up right, unique, beautiful, holy, calm, and where so many jewel or look on the inside of self. It's right there.

Inmate Prayer

I thank you lord for waking me up to another beautiful day that you have created. Giving me the chance and opportunity to be a part of your creation. I thank you lord for this blessed moment. And lord I want to thank you for the breath that you have allowed me to breathe right now in this present moment that brings to me life.

Lord I ask you to strengthen and protect all the weaker areas of me. Lord I ask for your wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Lord I ask for your patience, courage, and openness. Lord helps me to be successful in just about everything that I do. Lord I ask you to forgive me for each and every one of my sins. Lord let your will be done into my life. Empower me to live by faith and always count on you for each and everything.

Lord help me to accept the things I cannot change. Lord help me to have a change of heart. Lord use me. Clean me and bless me. Lord I ask you to guide my path. Lord please instill in me calmness, good, humor, strength, kindness. Lord help me to seek the best way to bring about that greater self within me. Lord please help me to master temptation. So you could master me. Lord help me to always be obedient to you call. Lord bring in to my life a perfect friend, one that will always tell me what is right. Lord watch over my mother, my brother, my sister, my niece, all my nephews and watch over the rest of my family and friends protect them bless them and be with them. Amen

My Love For You

My love for you is strong and hard,
 My love for you has come from God,
 And my love for you is just like the wind
 My love you are something that will never bend.
 My love for you is kind and great,
 My love for you better always appreciate,
 My love for you will always be there.
 My love for you is with understanding and care.
 My love for you will always come through the air.
 My love you will forever be fair.
 My love for you will be expressed in ways that can never
 be forgotten, my love for you is soft as cotton.
 My love for you is cold as ice.
 My love for you is special and nice.
 My love for you is with an over standing
 My love for you is always demanding.
 My love for you is from my heart.
 My love for you is sharp as a lighting rod.
 My love for you is as large as it can be.
 My love for you stands tall as a tree.
 My love for you is what it will always be.
 My love for you is a blessing from the one that lives
 high in the sky.
 My love for you will tear your eye.
 My love for you will make you cry.
 My love for you will never be a lie.
 My love for you is growing like a wild flower.
 My love for you will never turn sour.
 My love for you goes around faster than the hour.
 My love for you is like the Holy Bible.

You Are My Shadow

You are the shadow that shows up on time.
 You are the shadow I have been in search for.
 But yet been so hard to find.
 One day you will forever be mine.
 And you are like my own shadow.
 That I can't shake
 And all the kindness you bring to me will never to taking
 to be fake. Just hearing the name of shadow,
 Keeps my mind alerts, you are one shadow.
 That I will not bring upon you any hurt.
 So would you be my shadow, into death to us apart from
 this earth.
 I know that life shadows come and go just like the wind
 will blow.
 But the shadow of my life no one will ever know.
 You are the shadow that comes to me between rays of
 light,
 That will make any darkness bright.
 You are to me better than any shadow land,
 'Cause the love of you shadow, will always stand.
 And without a shadow of a doubt
 I know shadow you would be the best shadow you can.
 From one shadow to another.
 Shadow with a strong kind of embrace,
 When I close my eyes at night I can't help but see your
 face.
 And you are one shadow, in my mind that can never be
 erased.
 And so many shadow times with you,
 What help keeps you forever so safe.
 Shadow, you are my shadow,
 That observe me closely and secretly knowing I will
 stand the test,
 And what you see in me will be the best.
 So never count me out like you count out the rest.
 So shadow, with me just keep being your best.
 You are the shadow of my light, you are the shadow, I
 can't hold back.

He's Forever With Me

God is forever with me.
 Even though life has offered me so many hardships.
 So much adversity, so many obstacles.
 I have felt so much pain.
 It's done been times I don't almost went insane.
 But my better judgment was always informing me
 That God is forever with me and he will never forsake me.
 And knowing this alone is what kept me holding on.
 And the reason I know it was a God. And he was with me.
 'Cause there have been many times
 I could have lost my life over nonsense
 But I made it through a lot of death struck times.
 Which was times that came up in my life very often.
 But he was always with me.
 Many thought I was not going to make it to see eighteen
 years old.
 The word was always that young kid lil Michael,
 Was going to get killed at a very young age,
 But it never went down like that.
 'Cause little that they know he was forever with me.
 Now I did end up in prison at a very young age
 But it was still all good 'cause God was forever with me.
 He was always on my side forever more.
 'Cause that's what god offers.
 But I was too young and foolish to understand
 That god was forever with me.

You are to me better than any shadow land,
 'Cause the love of you shadow, will always stand.
 And without a shadow of a doubt
 I know shadow you would be the best shadow you can.

I Can Feel Your Pain

I can feel your pain,
 'Cause I know what it feels like when you are hurting on
 the inside.
 With nowhere to turn.
 I can feel your pain showing every bit of my concern.
 I can feel your pains 'cause I done been there before.
 I can feel your pain when you are hurting like hell.
 I can feel your pain when you are at the stage to rebel,
 I can feel your pain after being locked away
 For so many years in a jail cell.
 I can feel your pains when the going gets hard.
 I can feel your pain. When you are in need to turn to god.
 I can feel your pains when you are in need for an answer.
 I can feel your pains when your life is at ransom.
 I can feel your pains when you are alone.
 I can feel your pains when you are in need of a home.
 I can feel your pains hurting down to your bones.
 I can feel your pain just as I can feel my own.
 I can feel your pains when you are fighting hard.
 I can feel your pains right down in the bottom of my heart.
 And I know pains really hurt
 And from your pains learn how not to live in the dirt.
 I can feel your pain
 Because my life has been brought up in the struggle.
 I can feel your pains when I reach out my hand.
 I can feel your pain when it's time to take a stand.

MICHAEL MCKINNEY (CONT.)

Stop Loving Money Over Self

Money is not the answer to all things. And when we came into this world with nothing but our naked self, no money was attached to us. And we'll leave this world with nothing but our self and the meaning of money would not be able to go with us. And even money is not everlasting. It comes and it goes and as each and every one of us entered into this world as newborn babies, we did not even have the knowledge of what money is.

And at this same stage of being an infant if a bag with a million dollars was put in our hands it would be like we have nothing in our hands at all 'cause it would not mean anything to us 'cause we do not have the knowledge that we are holding this much money in our hands. But to an adult person who has greed for money and the knowledge to know how much money was being held in they hands not knowing that greed for this money blindfolds them. It tricks and traps them into the roots of all evilness. It keeps them believing in the dollar bill dream making them fall in love with the thoughts of always needing and wanting more money at whatever cost to get it. If it takes throwing they life away for money, then that's what will be done. And not really being actually aware of the fact that we put more into getting money than we put into making a better life for our self, and gaining that true knowledge of our self we need to

know about self.

And once we learn the self is the moment we would stop letting money rule our life and rule our mind and hearts cause a life is way more precious than any amount of money in this world and if we only knew what all a mother had to go through to bring a life into this world, we would drop the love for money and learn to cherish and love the self. Its nothing wrong with having money and using it for all the necessity reasons and when we get money greedy and lose control over self about money and get our hands on a big amount of money we lose all sense of direction with life and this money and go spending crazy and using the money on everything but the right thing and end up going broke before we know it.

And now we are back on the same track as to wanting more all over again. And I know for most people it don't take a whole lot of money for any one to make it through life from day to day basic and with the knowledge I now have I no longer crave for money. And I don't have a love for money at all. But at times I wish to somehow come up with a lump sum of money for all the right reasons 'cause now I have enough knowledge about myself to use the money to help the homeless, to feed the hungry, to provide shelter for people who are living on the streets, to be there for the needy and not the greedy, and to help all the troubled youths get an education. This what I call having love for self and the people, not having love for the money. So lets let the love for money go and pick up the love for self and other.

*we have not been allowed to find our way back to the sense of cultural identity and continuity,
which would transform us into a unified and whole people*

DAVEY PIERRE

We find some of the most intelligent people in the back of The Beat. Not only do they have the courage to step up to the pen and let their voices be heard, but they also speak about things we wouldn't normally think about because our minds are to cluttered to fathom such well-thought ideas. In his piece this week Davey Pierre gives us some history about Africans and how they've been crippled, even now, by the horrendous experiences of slavery. It's not fair to strip a people out of their homeland in order to force them to help build a civilization that would turn their noses up at them any way. He writes to us from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And with every word we see a man on a mission to better his people while everyone else seems to be counting his people out, including his own people. A hard task, but someone has to attempt it. And who better than a man who can lead with words as he does.

To Be African

By: Dr. Marimba Ali

All people, all over the world, throughout history, have shared in common the fact that they belong to a culture of origin. That is a universal reality. Another equally important universal reality is that there are many, many different cultures in the world and each of them are unique.

The uniqueness of a culture is what gives special ness to its members. They bonded together by their shared culture, which gives them a sense of collective identity.

We are an African people, "simply reveals that there are values, traditions, and a heritage that we share because we have a common origin."

The cultural process is naturally an ongoing, which allows people to continuously affirm their connectedness through being linked to their origins.

However, the continuity of our cultural identity has been interrupted cruelly and unnaturally by the experience of slavery. We as people are still suffering from this great crime because we have not been allowed to find our way back to the sense of cultural identity and continuity, which would transform us into a unified and whole people. We have not been able to function in the world with a collective consciousness that naturally imparts a strong sense of cultural roots.

The term "Maafa", (from the book, "Let The Circle Be Unbroken), is a Mahili word for "disaster that we are void using to regain our right to tell our own story. "Maafa" refers to the enslavement of our people and to the sustained attempt

to dehumanize us because the "Maafa" has disconnected us from our cultural origins. We have remained vulnerable in a social order that does not reflect our cultural identity. We are people of African ancestry living in denial of who we are. We have lost our strength as a people. We are losing our children to a system, which miseducates them. Our families are disintegrating before our eyes. Our numbers are growing in the statistics of drug addiction and incarceration.

Responsible, national, black organizations are seeking remedies for these problems, but we are not speaking with one voice. We need to work together as a family who supports its members and who is responsible for their welfare. We must use the most valuable asset that we have: that is the spirit of our people. It is that spirit that connects us to our African roots.

Slowly, we are awakening to the need to claim our cultural legacy. The term "Sankofa" from Akin tradition in Ghana, West Africa, tells us to return to the source so that we can go forward with strength and clarity. Culture is a powerful tool for inspiring human beings and bringing them together in a concerted "family" action.

Our cultural roots are the most ancient in the world. The spiritual concepts of our ancestors gave birth to religious thought. African people believe in the oneness of the African family through sacred time, which unites the past, the present, and the future.

We created the first civilizations thousands of years ago and they suffered the pain of the "Maafa", and yet they were able to endure the most disastrous and dehumanizing circumstances ever perpetrated against a group of people, only because of the power of the Afrikaan spirit. They did not have the freedom to affirm their cultural heritage. We now have that choice. In the Afrikaan view of life, it is our responsibility to honor their name.

This is perhaps our moment of truth. We must come together as a family. We must do all that we can do to uplift our people. Otherwise, we are still denying who we are and bringing dishonor to our "family name", to our ancestors.

The answer to our social dilemma is the resocialization of our people into the culture value system that affirms our spiritual being. Our ancestors are calling us "home", back to our cultural selves. We must begin the process of Sankofa.

No Haiku Death Poem For This Warrior

It would seem with more frequency when I discover myself pondering the life I've lived thus far. For it seems every time I turn around, I find myself measuring and comparing the length and quality of my life with someone whom my television just informed me has passed away. With a near callousness, I automatically do the math on the number of years the deceased has lived in comparison to myself. And judging by what he or she has left behind in their wake, determines whether they or I am a loser in the game of life. For instance, did they have children while I have as of yet failed to guarantee my genes carry on? Did they suffer unflattering features and social skills while I always prospered in such areas? Were they born into wealth and prosperity, while I had to hustle for every financial gain? Where they fearful and cautious when venturing out into the world, while I lived at a fast, fun and dangerous pace?

I can only guess this mental game I now find myself playing is due to recent threats that my days amongst the living are very short lived. And normally, I would pay little mind to such vicious declarations by my foes, and just dismiss them as tactics of psychological warfare. However, not too many moths ago I knowingly placed myself in an environment where those foes could end my life if their conspiring proved fruitful. I did such a thing not because I'm suicidal or anything, nor am I under the impression that I can't be harmed. No, I chose to place myself in harm's way simply to provide my enemies with an opportunity to still my breath.

Now, I fully comprehend that most people today would view my logic as flawed and foolhardy. But then, most people today don't suffer the burden of having a warrior's soul. And, of course, my foes would scoff at my claims of having the soul of a warrior. Yet, I'd sure like to see how they'd hold up against the same odds I'm currently up against. I'd like to see how "down" they are with two major prison gangs gunning for their heads. Would they be capable of keeping their nerves and wits about them, as adeptly as I myself have?

And speaking of wits, I wish those enemies would cease with their attempts to mentally outmaneuver me. For it should be clearly evident, y intellect has been vastly superior to all those who have come at me. So, those who seek ill will towards me should stick to what they know best, crude violence. For it's in such areas where they only potential for success over myself lies.

And should my foes at long last achieve their dark goals through acts of crude violence, I will not have been a loser in this strange game of life. How can I not hold such an outlook after comparing my life's experiences with that of those

ISRAEL PEREZ Perhaps because he must confront the very real issue of multiple "enemies" while also accommodating the reality of state prison, contributions from one of The Beat's most prolific and powerful writers, Israel Perez, have lately been few and far between. In this piece, he speaks about those stresses on his life while contemplating the possibility that they may lead to his untimely and unnatural death. But while we would expect such thoughts to bring a morbid sadness and self-pity, in the hands of a thinker/writer like Israel, they merely become an opportunity to ponder a life that, if it were to end today or tomorrow, would still have been filled with the experiences that give meaning to all our lives. In acknowledging that he has known what it is to love and be loved, he reminds us of a wonderful line from a song by Eden Ahbez titled, "Nature Boy" (made famous by Nat King Cole): "The greatest gift you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return." Mr. Perez writes The Beat from Salinas Valley State Prison.

who've sadly fared far worse? After all, have I now known all of my days a body, which has all of its limbs and organs working in fine order? Have I not been lucky enough to take in some of the most beautiful of California sunsets? Ate the crisp pure snow as a young boy in Idaho and Montana? Felt the rains of Washington on my face, even on my tongue as I looked to the sky? I've been lucky enough to feast on some of the most delightful of delicacies, from oysters in the half-shell to Japanese sushi, from curry rabbit to Peking duck. I've sipped fine cognac at hip nightclubs, and drank iced French coffee at quaint cafés. I've been deeply touched by some of the world's most wonderful works of literature, and I've been awed by some of the Renaissance masterpieces.

However, there is something even more important that all I've just listed. For you see, I've been blessed with the most valuable and precious gift that this world has to offer. And no amount of sharpened metal can pierce it; no razor blade can cut it; and no poison known to man can dilute it. The rare gift I've been blessed with is the knowledge of what it's like to truly love, what it's like to be truly loved. I've had the wonderful fortune of looking into the eyes of those souls traveling closest to me, and seeing the undying love they have for me. And I know first-hand what those souls would undergo for their love of me. I know what they'd sacrifice out of love for me. Such acts and will are utterly humbling, and fill me with a prideful joy I dare not attempt to describe.

So, when the hour of my death is upon me, and whether it finds me stumbling, walking, battling or sleeping into it, I will have left this world a happily content man. I will not worry the worms and small creatures who devour my earthly flesh, nor will I fear where my bare bones lie. Instead, I will go into that unknown oblivion without regret nagging at my conscience. I will go from this world without any longing pulling at my free soul. For there is no fear at the thought of my death, only joy for the experiences I've been granted in this lifetime.

KEXA GUTIERREZ

Writing from Santa Clara County Jail, this next writer writes about what it means to struggle. And if struggling to get through then you will only become more powerful on the other end. As humans, we endure a lot of pain because we dish out a whole lot of pain. So it's hard for us to make ourselves vulnerable by being off guard. But in being vulnerable and off guard, we're actually learning how to go through hardships knowing that as long as these experiences aren't the cause of our demise, things will always get better. We appreciate Kexa for touching on this topic and hope more topics will be touched on in the near future by this writer.

Pushed Beyond My Limits

As this Eagle Warrior Spirit contends within the confines of this reality, it is apparent that one must commence assertive academics against the furtive, subversive sensory deprivation, and long-term isolation that endeavors to overwhelm and divide one's mind! This will, in effect, promote and gradually unfold a tremendous aggregate of tumultuous brain-storming of which acute awareness is a by-product!

Hardened by hundreds of years of oppression! Pushed beyond my limits, I learned to exceed my limits. First, mentally, then physically, and finally, spiritually! Building endurance! I used to watch the "Magician's Box." Now, it watches me: repetition, repetition, probabilities, and possibilities. I am Indigenous.

A Struggle

Life is struggle — struggle is life
Revolutionary minds — continue to stride
A cause against — all oppression
Against obsession — all oppression
Against obsession — with race depression
Yet I contemplate... Behold thee...

What becomes free — revolutionaries end
In complacency...
So what now

Mr. Know-it-all-Lift only one,
To let others fall? Who is now suffering
Beneath? It used to be you
Now it's another...Gee?

So it's clear — we all have struggles
A Mac-10 protects mine — while God sorts others?
And yet there is — another solid solution
A symposium of words — continue the evolution
Life in struggle — struggle in life
Evolutionary minds — enhance to survive.

SPIRITUAL GANGSTA

Our biblical queen is back on the prowl with poems she's written right before she was getting out last year. Well, she's out now and doing well. She's still devoted to God (which is very respectable since most people give their lives over to him and then get out and forget about him). She even called the office trying to track down old poems and as we expected her voice is just as sweet, if not more sweet, than her words. Probably the most consistent writer in The Beat's ten year history, she stays true to form as she continually lets us know how important God is in her life. And not only does it work for her, but because it has worked for her, she's been able to bring her peers down the same journey with her. That's the mark of a true leader. We never get tired of hearing about God when it comes from someone who writes so elegant as Rhonda. We know she will succeed as long as she can keep her faith because it's gotten her this far and that's not bad at all. She's a true survivor of many things and now it just seems like she's ready to go on with her life while spreading the word of how great God has been to her. She was in a Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut when she wrote this but as you read it, she's now a free woman. Lets picture her rejoicing in freedom as we all pursue that same sort of liberation.

The Pro Foe

Satan tried to mess up my plans
Before I got out the door
Because Satan wants me
To still be his whore,
Defeat tried to capture me again
The foe came in pretending to be a friend
It's because I'm no longer a servant to sin
That Satan seeks ways, to lure me in
He continuously tries to put thoughts in my head
Telling me to listen to him instead
And my loyalty to Christ God doesn't deserve
That it's him Satan I should serve,
Hoping that I can be enticed
To listen to his demonic advice
His authority I know how to make diminish
By quoting Christ and saying "it's finished,"
My Christian victory, has set me free
I'm taught warfare, to make Satan flee
But although I say "be gone Satan,"
I know that he is still out there waiting
Because this is what I've come to know
Satan is not a friend, he's the enemy a foe,
I have to watch out for Satan because he's a pro
But I refuse to be his ho,
Satan will only use and abuse
That's why it's Christ Jesus that I choose
The wages of sin is a fiery death in hell
That's why I refuse to let Satan prevail

Being True To The Game

There are many who are true to the game,
But the question is, is the game true to them?
In the game you thought they'd have your back,
But once things went down there is no contact.
All those ninjas that you use to be around,
Now they are nowhere to be found.
Because if they were really true,
They would still be there for you.
After all this is supposed to be your family,
But what good is community that has no unity?
It's because in the game you stand for nothing,
So you can fall for anything!
When you first got in the game you were raw,
But as time passes you realize that you've been deceived.
It's after you've been compromised,
That you see the game ain't nothing but lies,
All the while you thought the game was cool,
They had been playing you, like a fool.
From what I've seen about the game,
Give me no reason to want to be in the game,
Because the game is not what they lead you to believe.
That's why it's called the game,
Because some will win and some will lose,
The choice is yours to choose,
Message delivered by spiritual gangsta Rhonda Jones.

The Bible Says

A lot of people don't really understand the relationship that our loving Father, God, seeks to have with His children.

They think that serving God is all about restrictions that will present them from having fun any longer. In which by no means is true.

Those who make the commitment to follow Christ are taught by the example that Christ demonstrated. They choose to be submissive and obedient to the Word of God. They learn how to understand a Scripture and then apply it to their lives. And this is why the Bible has so much relevance, because the Bible teaches intelligence.

The Bible tells us the Golden Rule, to treat others the same way we want them to treat us.

The Bible tells us not to judge because the same judgment that we judge, we shall be judged. There is only one law given and that's God.

The Bible tells us to love the Lord with all of our hearts, mind, and souls, and to love one another, the same way we are to love ourselves.

The Bible tells us to serve one another in love. God is our Father, and He has a loving father's heart, and He won't withhold no good things from us.

The Bible tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and everything else shall be added onto us.

The Bible tells us that we can do things through Christ Jesus that strengthens us.

Jesus came that we may have life and that we may have it more abundantly.

The Bible says, my God will supply all of my needs.

The Bible says, apart from God we can't do nothing, but with God all things are possible.

The Bible says, "Come to me and I will give you rest." It doesn't say get your life together first and then come to me, it says come to me. It's God who will clean you up and then get you ready. So you don't have to be ready. You just have to pray and ask God to get you ready.

The Bible says, "Commit your ways onto the Lord and He shall give you your hearts desires."

The Bible says, "To taste and see that the Lord is good," and then those restrictions that you thought would put an end to your fun, you'll see that they are guard rails for your own protection.

God Bless Love Spiritual Gangsta.

The Lord Has Plans For Rhonda Jones

I once was lost, but now I see;
The Lord has other plans for me...
It wasn't clear to me just then;
I told Him of my every sin...

I asked Him in my hour of need;
To make me clean, He did indeed...
He filled my heart with Joy and Love;
Blessing me from heaven above...

He told me of a life to be;
Wonderful, for all eternity...
I once was lost, but now you see;
I know the Lord has plans for me!

The Bible says, "For I know the plans
I have for you, declares the Lord.
Plans to prosper you and not to harm you.
Plans to give you hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11

Stop serving time,
Stop serving sin,
Start serving God...
Stop living your way,
Start living God's way.

Discharge Plans

Don't want to make arrangements
Just before you leave
Make them at least three months in advance
So you won't be deceived
Because at the end of our bids
We get intense:
So thoughts in advance
Make good sense
We don't want to leave under pressure
In the blind
Now is the time for us
To use our minds
That's if you really intend
To give your life a chance
To invest in preventive measures
In advance
Too many times
I left out of here lost
So this message
I'd like to get across,
We need to be aware
Of the choices that we make
So we don't get out
And make the same mistakes
Because if we go down the same path again
It's only a matter of time
That we will be right back in
When we're in this situation, it's our own fault
So it's time to give our lives some serious thought.

Where?

Where did I go wrong
I really cannot tell;
But whenever it is, I must say
Its put me through a lot of hell...
I would not listen to my friends
Nor my family
I made a habit of coming to jail
For years annually...
I should have listened to them all;
And take their advice;
But since I've been here, a friend I've found
His name is Jesus Christ...
It's through Him that I found the way,
He showed me where I was wrong;
He taught me how to love and live
And the best way to get along...
I'll be out in a week or so
And gladly go my way;
I'll make it better, this I know
For I have learned to pray...

Message Delivered

In Jesus Christ, we face each day, with that assurance, that our past is forgivened, our future is secure, and our present rests in the hands of a loving heavenly father. (R-H- 4 Bible Club) I'm so glad we have all decided to spend our eternity with the God who made us. Let us have faith in God's love and extend it to others, through our lives, let us do our part, so that the Lord may do his work. Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. Our God did not give up on us and so how can we give up on others? May we always remember that "this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Beloved since god loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. This message is to the R HU Bible Club. To Tonya love Spiritual Gangsta.

SPIRITUAL GANGSTA (CONT.)

We need to be aware
Of the choices that we make
So we don't get out
And make the same mistakes

Good Morning Bible Club

Be a Cheerful Giver! Praise the lord, the bible says, be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share 1 Tim 6:18. we are to faithfully encircle each other with prayer and encouragement. There are needs all around you that you can have a ??? part in meeting.

As Christians we are to distribute our love to one another gladly. Not just in financial situations, but in spiritual situations also.

There will be times when we barely have but just enough. But when we put all our trust in Jesus, as our supplier, he made us these promises and he's not a liar.

So we can be rich in our deeds, because our father already knows our needs. The bible says, and we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. I John 5:14.

The bible says trust in the living God, who giveth us richly, all things to enjoy. 1 Tim 6:17.

The bible says give and it shall be given unto you. Good measures, pressed down, and shakened together and running over. English version. Give to others and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands, all that you can hold. The measure you use for others, is the one that God will use for you. Message delivered.

From The East To The West

I wrote Nasir Davis at Kern Valley
But the letter came back:
Stating this correspondence
Is not an approved contact.
Because of the distance
I wasn't expecting this:
So I want to advise him
To put Rhonda Jones on his list,
That's why I'm writing Nasir
This short brief poem;
Yet by the time he reads it
I'll be home.
Fellowshipping at the New Beginnings
Outreach Ministry, 2403 Jefferson
Davis Hwy, Richmond, VA 23234.
I'm going in the Timothy Halfway House.
I'm looking forward
To being your pen friend:
So you will be
Hearing from me again.
Connecticut Club also have to
Have authorization
In order to have
Jail to jail communication.
I will be free:
So for now you can count on
Hearing from me.
Even if the letter has to go on a journey
I'll get to you, through my attorney.

SPIRITUAL GANGSTA (CONT.)

Bible Club

The bible says, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace where in we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation? patience. And patience experience and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because thy love of god is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Romans 5: 1-5

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Behold, they eye of the lord is upon them that fear him. Upon them that hope is his mercy. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord, he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

The F-ing Truth

One of the inmates wrote on the wall F-God
 And after I thought about it what they said is
 not odd...

They said F-God when he first made God in
 him seen

In spite of all his miracles they still treated
 him mean...

They persecuted him every chance that they
 could

Not once funding in him what was not good...

Even when they nailed him on the cross
 Christ still prayed for those that are lost

Jesus said, "Father forgive them
 For they know not what they do"

In spite that they were still saying F you...

They continuously verbally abused him

Although all the good, he did for them,

The bible says "they proceed from evil to evil
 Adding sin to sin" Jeremiah 9:3

They say F you by not acknowledging him

So to all those who are servants to sin

You too are saying F you to him.

Message For Those On The Inside

If you want to change your life, you must start the process of changing right now while you are there.

You have to be willing to be obedient to self discipline, you have to be open to learning new behaviors and you have to get use to the before and after differences.

You have to prioritize, your behaviors and decide which ones you need to keep and which ones you need to get rid of.

You have to be dedicated to learning new behaviors. You have to be willing to change the way you think. You have to be open to suggestions, and criticism.

Most of all, you must invest your time in this, and the more that you put into this, the better the results will be.

Because if you don't change while you are in here, don't expect to change when you get out there. Change takes that commitment, and only you can change you. Even a little change is better than no change at all. Just don't expect to change over night. Change takes time.

Destroy Gossip By Ignoring It A Dose of Daily Bread

When a fire finishes burning through the material it feeds on, it goes out. Simultaneously, when gossip reaches the ear of someone who will not repeat it, IT DIES.

Gossips like other sins, is like "tasty trifles." (Proverbs 26:22). We like to hear it and share it with others because it "Tastes" good. Gossip is rooted in our need to feel good about ourselves. As we bring others down, we gain the illusion that we are moving upward... That's why spreading gossip is so difficult to resist.

It takes prayer and God's grace to bring us to the point where we refuse to pass it on or even hear it even under the guise of persona concern or a request to pray for a sinning friend in trouble.

We must ask God for the wisdom to know when to speak, what to speak, and when to simply keep our mouths shut. The bible says he who restrains his lips are wise. It's often wise to be quiet and speak few words. But if we must speak, let's talk of those things that encourage and move others close to God, not the things that will discourage and hurt them. The bible says, the tongue of the wise promotes health. The tongue can spread suspicion, and reputation steal; but when the foul controls our tongue, it's words will soothe and heck! Where there is no wood, the fire goes out, and where there is no talebearer, STRIFE CEASE. This is a DAILY BREAD.

JOHN RICHARD BROWNE

Even though he lets it be known that this isn't something he wrote, we thought we should publish it because it has real meaning for him personally. And though we've heard it before, it's always liberating to know we aren't the only ones who want love while we're living rather than have people come out of the woodwork when we've passed away. It seems like people do that a lot, won't show someone love until they're dead. It's not right, but hey, like incarceration you don't know what good you hold until you've flung it away. Read on and don't fling away the thought of giving now rather than later. John Richard Browne writes us from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison.

Give Now

I would rather have one little rose from the garden of a friend
 Then to have choicest flowers when my stay on Earth must end.

I would rather have one pleasant word in kindness said to me,
 Than flattery when my heart is still and life cease to be.

I would rather have a loving smile from friends I know are true,
 Then tears shed 'round my casket when this world I bid adieu!!!!

Blossoms bring to me today, whether pink, white, or reds, I'd rather
 have one blossom now, than a truckload when I'm dead...

(I believe my mother was trying to tell me it was the end for her by
 sending me the above poem. (Author unknown)

Because if you don't
 change while you are
 in here, don't expect
 to change when you
 get out there.

Devil on my shoulder whispering in my ear
And telling me what to do,
Angel on the opposite whispering in the other telling
me what is true

What These Demons Won't Do

What these demons won't do to keep me tied up under
their spell

They want me to fail, kamikaze to hell
But my conscious is eating at me vanishing my soul
But sin is eating at me, and it's eating real slow
Goin' bone to bone, flowing through my veins
Increasing the tone extending through my mental
waves,

Making me crazy, lunatic, 5150, psycho
Mind going real sick at the devil's sideshow
Four doors open and I'm yoking through my spiritual
zone

Getting' it on
Blowin' on sin till my mind's gone
Devil on my shoulder whispering in my ear
And telling me what to do,
Angel on the opposite whispering in the other telling
me what is true

I must be dreaming, seeing demon eating human flesh
Breaking on bones, drinking on blood eating up their
best

Jumping on my back clawing on my shoulder
Tearing through my chest
They're trying their hardest to bring
Me down but I succeed their test
I refuse to lose I push, pull, strive, and do my very best
That's all I can do in this messed up world.
With the devils demons seeing me in no rest
I need a spiritual vest to keep these
Demons bullets penetrating my chest
It's like 2 Pac said, "I got a head with no screws in it,
what can I say one life to live and nothing to lose."
These demons choose me,
They try to do me
I been to hell and back and the devil refused me!

Course 2X

What these demons wont do, do for me,
They tried everything but I stayed on my feet
In my life Jesus you,
Took the demons away and gave me love that was true...

CHRIS GRAJEDA When people think about The Beat, they automatically think of loyal writers that stick out the most. Writers like Michail Markhasev, Israel Perez, and this next one. Chris Grajeda was a powerhouse presence in our workshops in the Alameda County Juvenile Hall (150 Crew) and nothing has changed except the fact that he's moved on to a more serious place. He's now in the Deuel Vocational Institute in Tracy, CA. This week he hits us with three incredible poems. True to form he makes us think with these pieces. He writes one warning his peers about the evils that are lurking around. Then he explains how his own demons are always present and how he has to deal with them on the daily. And he closes with a magnificent poem to his wife wishing her a Happy Birthday. Her birthday has passed a while ago, but that doesn't mean the thought on our end doesn't count, for here it is published alongside many other great pieces. We always talk about how we've grew to love Chris and even if you get tired of it, we will never stop.

Warned

I'm lost in complete darkness and my mind went astray
I try to rebuke the devil but he seems to never go away
He tries to condemn my mind and take control of my every
action

But I praise God for my gift of reaction
So I must warn you the devil roams the earth like a crazed
beast

Looking for the weak hearted individuals, on their minds
he will feast

His ways are to steal, kill and destroy
To try and use us as his demented little toys
Fight the good fight of faith and strive towards eternal life
Try to stay positive and push for what is right
Stay prayed up on guard never let yourself get torn
And now take heed and consider yourself warned!

Happy B Day (Dedicated To My Wife)

Baby girl, I will always love you everyday that passes by:
I will love you in the morning and evening,
Everyday until I forever close my eyes:

My love and care for you, I will proudly let it be known:
I will never hurt or neglect you or ever leave you alone:
I just want to wish you a happy birthday
And for many more to come:

I wish I could spend your special day with you,
And show you real woman to man fun:
I'm so fortunate to have a woman like you:
That's why I stress once again my love is true:
You're all that I could hope for and everything that I need:
Your love is so strong that it could bring a grown man to
his knees:

This poem I write to you, is simply words from my heart:
And hopes and wishes,
That your birthday was suspenseful from the start:

LIL' SPANKS Once a powerhouse participant in our Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall workshops, this next writer continues to send us riveting poems, as is the following piece. He describes the life of someone who he was obviously close to that fell victim to meth use. Meth is a harsh drug and can take us away from the ones who hold us dear. And although this fact is unfortunate, it's one that we're sure many people can relate to. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and we're sure he'll be able to see his shadow under the streetlight once again. It's just a shame that meth took his shadow mate away from him.

Shadows Under

Once close at heart
Now becomes a stranger
In the cold dark
Lurks danger
Blinded by her own ignorance
She sees it not
Too late for me to intervene
She drops heart stops

Smoked her pain
Called "crystal meth"
Scandalous ways
Introduced her to a quick death
A soul whose lost
With skin so soft
Now wrinkled and chilled to the touch
Creepy tingles shoot up my spine
Jaw locks and fist clutched
Lifeless in a casket
She lies
Stepped outside
Where tears are washed away by rain
With memories that hurt
Even burn
I imagine gazing
At the sparkles in her eyes
And return to the place we called home
As shadows un

GEMINI There are many conflicting ideas with this next writer. We first met him in our workshops in Alameda County Juvenile Hall and then he came out to work with us. But after a while he had other things planned and just recently went on a long tour of the country. He says he's been all over. Atlanta, New York, and a lot more places is where he went. But now he's back and it seems like he met a great woman while traveling, for he writes about her in two of his pieces. But then what's conflicting is that he speaks as though he's back with a vengeance, or like his heart has turned cold. But when he writes about this girl, we can tell his heart is as warm as a summer's sun. Again, he's writing from our offices so if there are typos it's because he typed them. We had nothing to do with it...

Missin' You

Remember the times we had and goin' 'cause life will never stop for you cause your mine DD. I love you unlike any woman I ever met in this life. You made me find myself and become a man. Didn't no one want us to be together and we still are 'cause I love you and this life is nothing with out you. Even though I haven't been the best man I do what I can I don't sell nothing but my soul. This dolla keep runnin' but you stay. Only tears fill my eyes when I think of you and wish you were right next to me and be there holdin' my hand never letting go.

I wish I were with you right now so many miles between but I feel our dream cause this is our time babe. Nobody can stop this love like this is what you read or see on T.V. or something like it, feeling the loneliness from your touch but when I close my eyes I don't see the hate and pain, I see your face like a glow filling the dark with light and no one can take that. You are my life and everything I ever dreamed of and god has only spit at me all life. But when I met you in Atlanta I knew I found my wife/soul mate and I never let go I haven't been that faithful I wished I didn't cause now I have to have secrets with you only cause I needed to know to myself cause I cant even feel happy around other women the way I am around you. I only treat them for they cash but I don't want that from you just your love 'cause without that I'm dead and life is too beautiful to lose so leaving Florida to come here and make a better life for us didn't work cause jobs don't just get handed out and I see I should've never left cause when I hold you in my arms I know I'm going to cry cause I know I got you and every stress in my life will disappear and the rain will cease and the sun will warm our backs and no one can say nothing ever again cause this is the end of my solo life.

No more runnin' in the street cause you all I need. Money can never buy you, no purp can give me the high you give me, you're my other half and I respect you so much. I wish I didn't do the things I did coming here but a man makes mistakes and you will never know cause I'd hate to have to say this shhh to yo' face so I do over snares and bass cause music always took me away and it don't matter cause I got you and I plan on never letting go even when this life is over I'll be waitin' for you on the other side and smile when we sit in harmony

I Remember

I remember every day spent with you was like a dream thought it would never end. Now waking up without your touch got my heart feelin empty. Where you at to hold my back when I feel so lost my times get harder. Holdin' on to you in my thoughts 'cause I can't let you go even though I know your fadin' in my life. Where you at DD I need you.

Remeberin' the look in yo' eye when I left. I hope I see you in this life and hold for the rest of my time. I prayed God would take you away and now when I open my eyes I see only pain not us close I see you in my arms again and each day that passes I never forget you. Even if I'm around other girls they will never fill yo' shoes. Carisa its I luv 4life even if you ain't by my side cause I'm your angel and I will have in this life or the next watchin' over you cause it should of end this way with me walkin' away I can feel your tears for they are my rain washing my pain shawty. Time is only on the mind so what we can do is pray that god brings you back to me cause I will give my breath for you and where we met in this is where the last touch and kiss never forget the look in your eye.

Sayin' Goodbye

This is what you call a Cali sign off
Yours truly GEMINI cause times off
The old are dead walkin' down
The sco ain't what it was when I was a real youngin and now
I see what it all meant friends gone and moved on
Where am I at right here but not all here
So I look into the east again
'Cause leavin' each time I realized how much I loved my home
But when I get here I realize how much its changed
You cant see the old faces cause they're gone
The little hyphy me is dying cause I'm bay area till I die
But this static won't be count me to its toll
I'll be the one to tell you that love for all my yaya area beasts
But this is where I say peace
'Cause my life has moved on and so has my mind
And mentality now don't get twisted I'm from soft this is a old dream trying to be accomplished over and over
So I let my emotions go and follow my heart and I say good bye

You Know It Go

Well what's left to say
I'm going to the town on empty feelin' lucky ain't part of my plan
Sunny I'm hotter than any of da god sons
Put 'em out in the ashtray its payday
'Till my last day ninjas try to stunt only on the front
I'm the realest alive so I'm get it and stack like books and hit gear 3
Be zoomin' like peace you see me runnin'
Do the thang selling nothing still collectin' on y'all broke joke
Havin' ninjas if you only seein' I dun pulled her and let her go
'Cause my female down and she don't get none of the profit
So see it believe it the hitta here and the city never sleeps
So stay awake cause this is the hitta
Learn it or get burned cause a hot boy settin' hills to fire
Here we go hold on to the sides cause ninjas like me
We fly real high if you heard it then u know it go

I will hold you in my memories for ever cause you are my soul mate now as realty fills the air I feel trapped in this life I left. It creeps on me like a ocean's tide covering my mind with the depression of you goin and out of my reach. Call and no answer where did you go cause we were meant to grow old together and see what we hadn't yet, happiness?? But now this is my road and I see it for the last time I roam earth alone and my kids are a part of me but that's for another life cause love is the burden. A man loves and hates. This is my burden of life I know my empty spot caused by lost and broken dreams and I watched it fall right before my eyes. I wish I made it right but I did what was my part and this time it failed much too fast but we all have a purpose so we will meet again and I will look into your eyes and hold you till I forget the very time I left you and know this is my time to go on this thought you may never see me again but I never forget lookin' in your eyes and asking you to marry me and you said yes.

I pray I see you in this or the next life cause I prayed for you and now your gone. I promise to find you're my heart and soul keep me going with your love DD I will never let go cause you wouldn't want me to God will meet us in life again I LUV U

Moral Compass

Growing up, I was a Boy Scout and spent a lot of my time hanging out in the woods. To this day, I love few things more than I do hiking through the woods or camping. Boy Scouting not only cultivated in me a love and respect for the outdoors, but it also taught me how to survive in the woods. I never worry about getting lost or stranded with no way out; scouting taught me to find my way in the woods day or night.

Besides a pocketknife, a scout's most essential tool is a compass. A compass tells him which direction he is heading in. A map is no good in the woods without a compass to orient it. Knowing how to use a compass is vital to finding your way in the woods because even with a map, unless you know what direction you are going, you are certain to get lost in the labyrinth of trees. The same is true with life.

Sacred scriptures and spiritual books are maps to a better life, but if you have no moral compass or don't use it, you are sure to get lost in the jungles of moral deprivation. Having a holy book in your hand without a moral compass to orient you is no different than being in the woods with a map and no compass.

This is the dilemma so many of us find ourselves in when embarking on a religious path. Too many of us cultivate our knowledge of scriptures without learning to use our moral compass. The result is a lost person with the knowledge of the Bible, Koran, or any other sacred book. And even with the book in hand, we just get more lost as we journey through life. A commitment to learning scripture is good, but we must also line up with and learn to follow our moral compasses.

Your moral compass is your sense of right and wrong, what some call the conscience, inner voice, or spirit. It is what allows us to know right from wrong. For most of us, it points us in the right direction, even when we are traveling in the wrong direction. For example, a man who is about to steal a car may know deep down inside what he is about to do is morally wrong. Yet, despite this knowledge, he does it anyway. His moral compass points him in the right direction, but he chooses not to follow it.

Sacred scriptures, like maps, can tell us where we're at in life, as well as where we need to be, but it is our moral compasses — conscience, spirit or whatever you want to call it — that orients the direction we travel. Until we learn to follow this compass, knowledge of books won't help us much. When we find ourselves in trouble, it's not because we weren't reading our Bibles; it's because we weren't following the right direction our moral compasses pointed us towards. Knowing that vstealing is wrong and doing it anyway is like knowing you're supposed to go north, seeing your compass pointing north, and going south instead. If you wound up in the wrong place, it's because you chose not to follow your compass.

Not long ago, I had met a man here who had become very religious. He was the leader — what some call a jailhouse preacher — of a prayer group of about fifteen inmates. They called him "Rev." He carried his Bible everywhere he went, and never spoke a sentence without augmenting it with a quote or two from the Bible. I saw him every day preaching to his little congregation. His zeal for the Christian faith was second to none. He often testified, "Now that I have the Word in me, I can not go wrong again." One day they released him. He gave away all he had accumulated in jail to his Christian brothers, but kept his Bible, saying it alone would keep him out of trouble.

About two weeks later, I spotted Rev on the rec yard detached and obviously depressed. I went over to him and shook his hand. We talked a while before I finally asked him why he was back in jail so soon. He said he had a new case. The police busted him with crack cocaine in a drug-infested area. He was back for selling drugs. He said he knew he was heading wrong, but still decided to go back to selling drugs. Rev went on to tell me the reason for his downfall was he had stopped studying his Bible. He assured me this time he would not lay his Bible down.

Rev has read the Bible from cover to cover many times during his frequent jail stays, and knows it like the back of his hand. His downfall was not because he laid his Bible down; it is because he chose not to follow the direction of his moral compass that indicated drug dealing was not the right path to a better life.

Every religious tradition encourages us to learn to develop and follow our moral compasses. In Christianity, it is called living by the Spirit. In Islam, it's following the will of Allah. In Buddhism, it is taking in the Middle Path. In Hinduism, it is the Dharma.

Some believe we were born with the sense of right or wrong, and innate sacred distinction between us and other creatures. I believe this is only partly true. Our moral or higher conscience is the part of us that makes us like God. It is believed to be a divine nature that marks us creatures made in His image. We are born with it, but it must be cultivated properly for it to point us in the right direction. This is why all religious exhort us to develop a child's sense of moral accountability early. The Bible teaches that

PAUL JAY REED Whatever "free" people think of those we hide behind thick walls and razor ribbon (walls designed as much to keep us "good" people from the guilty knowledge of what goes on in our names as to keep "bad" people locked in), anyone who reads *The Beat* knows that in these pages can be found not only poetry and prose that rival the best, but also some of the greatest moral teachers of our time. Such is the case with Paul Jay Reed. It is not just the quality of his writing that blows our minds (check out "Dark Warriors"), it is also the strength of his character that shines through in such pieces as "Using Your Moral Compass." Hardly a week passes without *The Beat* benefiting from something new we receive from this gifted writer and thinker. Paul Jay Reed writes us from Beaumont, Texas.

we should train children morally so that as they mature, they won't depart from the right path in life.

Many of us have had so little moral conditioning that our moral compasses are defective. When a child grows up in a deprived environment where violence, drugs, promiscuity, pimping and prostitution are not only normal but also honored, he develops into a defective moral agent. He may feel no remorse for killing a person because that person owes him money. A girl who grows up in an atmosphere where a nice body and sex is used to get women what they want, will not consider exposing her body or having sex for money to be wrong. Remember what the stripper told Lisa Rae in "the Players Club" — "Girl, you got to use what you've got to get what you need."

When a child grows up believing right is wrong and wrong is right, his chances of making sound moral choices are diminished. His moral compass pulls in the wrong direction. Prisons and jails are full of men and women with dysfunctional moral compasses.

While I was earning my Wilderness Survival Merit Badge, my scoutmaster warned me that my compass can get demagnetized and become defective, or I may find myself without a compass. He taught me how to use the things around me to orient myself. For instance, the sun always rises on the east and sets on the west. During winter months, moss only grows on the side of the tree that faces south. He also taught me how to locate and follow the North Star. With this knowledge, even without a functioning compass, I can find my way through the woods. The point is that no matter how we grew up, if we pay attention, there are enough things around us to help us determine if the way we are living is good or bad.

I used to be very promiscuous. I grew up around men who believed that having sex with as many women as you could was both a good thing and the greatest symbol of your manhood. Pregnant women, to them, were just evidence of their sexual potency and desirability as men. So I grew up believing that there was nothing wrong with a loose sex life nor with being unfaithful in relationships. Guys who were not fast and who were faithful to their lovers were considered hen-pecked chumps or suckers. What's more, I seldom practiced safe sex!

As I got older, I began to see the results of this lifestyle in others. Many of the men I admired most for their numerous sexual exploits were in and out of jail behind child support. Those unfaithful men who were married to beautiful, loving wives found themselves in divorce court, losing not only their women but their possessions as well. As some got older, they were reduced to the services of prostitutes. And many had contracted HIV and other diseases. This was the direction I was heading in — and I wasn't foolish enough to believe that these things could not happen to me if I didn't change directions. My moral compass was not pointed in the right direction, but observing the things around me helped me to begin making better choices in my sex life. I wanted to be a man, but promiscuity was not the route there. That lifestyle has reduced so many men to nothing.

Today I know that my manhood is not defined by how many women I have had sex with, or how many children I can sire, and I've developed a sounder moral conscience sexually.

Life is a jungle and finding our way can be difficult. Making it through this jungle without getting lost requires our learning to develop and follow our moral compasses. I haven't always followed mine. As a result, I've often found myself in situations and places I didn't want to be in. Though I find much wisdom reading sacred books that can help me determine the best way to live, I've realized that until I start following my moral compass, my knowledge of scripture alone is not enough to lead me to a better life. I must make better choices.

Because I am now learning to follow my moral conscience more, I've been taking more steps in the right direction than I did in the past. I meditate often to quieten my mind so I can learn to distinguish that small still voice of the Spirit. Before I act impulsively, I think about the possible results my actions may bring and where I could end up. I am slowly developing into a more conscientious person.

We're never too lost to change our directions and find our way to a better life. Use scripture as a map, but learn to use your moral compass.

JEREMY TOWNER We've been waiting to hear from this next writer for a while. We were beginning to worry about him. What sets him apart from many writers is that he can paint pictures with his words. And not just your average picture but real vivid pictures that display his life. He talks about everything from living without not being easy, to no mercy for silent screams, where he's basically saying a closed mouth doesn't get fed. And no one will help someone who doesn't know they need help. But anyhow, he continues with our personal favorite, "Realization," where he looks in the mirror and finally realizes many things. He concludes with a poem called, "Look Up," and throughout these four pieces he really lets us know who he is. He takes us on a journey, as he always does, through his life and we're very appreciative. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, if you didn't already know. Hopefully he won't take as long to drop something on us as he did the last time. We just wouldn't be able to take it... Just kidding... Btw, we first met Jeremy when he was a youngsta in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall.

Life Without Ain't Easy

There exists no such saying from anyone with a light of truth, that life would be easy. Nothing that comes to us in life is ever easy. Even faith is a trial that darkens our minds with weakness. For we know in what has been written upon our hearts since our first breath of life. But the enormity of free will distracts our responsibility to the vast reaches of self-righteous desires. Only those who hear the call of their hearts stay and heed the warnings of death in the ways of darkness.

Some, though, feel the need to go beyond what they have to grab hold of the offerings that are whispered from the shadows of doubt. Not remembering what they have left behind they become swallowed up into the darkness to wonder, lost in their own tree of knowledge of right and wrong, morals and ethics, lies and truths. Deceived and deceiving they gain only what is momentary, believing that they have the treasure of the world. Though outside they look happy and clean, inside is a miserable depression that needs more to satisfy its hunger. Hearts become hardened thoughts become insanity, charity becomes jealousy, and life becomes death. Only when they know that darkness surrounds them and that there is no light in what they do, do they cry out a howl of anguish and loss. But the heart that is ever patient listens to the pains of the soul and like a soft touch of wind upon our beaten minds it whispers a love long forgotten and a compassion that overcomes the deeds of our past and tells us of a way to the future — an endless source of wisdom and forgiveness just waiting to be drawn from the source of life within us.

But our struggle to find the light again is not without its stumbling blocks. It is like walking in mud up to your knees. Pulling and struggling towards dryer safer land, we then see what we have forgotten. That we have always had what we needed. We just forgot how to listen to the whispers of our hearts in a life that is never easy.

Realization

I saw myself for the very first time
All along I thought I was doing fine
But nothing was as I thought it would be
Now I write from prison wishing I were free
Inside my spirit was the wound up hate
That would lead my actions to inevitable fate
I couldn't control it, it needed release
Or my thoughts would fill with insanity abandoning peace
But insane I was for things I did
In my release I took, in regret I give
I hang my head in shame and despair
For all I've done not one was fair
Now in a mirror I see a young face
Full of sad wrinkles and tears of disgrace
If I only knew then what I know now
I could have chosen a different way somehow
But what's done is done the wounds are healed
The scars I bear keep me in fear
For I now know the dark deeds I can do
But only if I give in to evil I lose.

Look Up

It is but a hopeless wish to be young again. To not know the way the world is can only be a fantasy. To know only of the security of family and friends. It seems like a past life. My troubled mind always walking forward but looking back. Its no wonder I couldn't see where I was going. Step by step into a pit of my own design to be swallowed up and forgotten. Lost to the tragedy of ignorance. It is as if I was well aware, somewhere in this soul, of what awaited belong my years but so suppressed was my sense of responsibility that I could not change my ways. Oh how I awaited a change of fate. But too late did I gain control over my self-righteous ways. Always too late. Like seeing the end of a cliff and knowing your path leads to a loss of life but only when you test the laws of gravity do you realize what a fool you have become. And so you fall and cry out in despair searching for something to halt your descent into the pit. Some out cropping or a branch of a stranded tree. Realizing all is about to come to an end in a horrible way your heart beats harder and sorrow floods the gates that have barred the access to your mind and with one last cry you watch as the world rushes to crush your evil ways.

And swallowed you become in a pit of darkness. Alone afraid with no one to hear your voice. It is a dark silence with only your heart to keep the rhythm of your life. Then from the depths of this insanity others who have shared in the path you walked, the path they paved, reach out to you to claw at you. They dig their seeds of hatred in your mind and cling to you for their own sense of security that their misery is not an illusion. That all they worked to accomplish was for not. For now they have you in their tight grips to drag you even deeper into the depths of chaos.

Here I am to await the next step in death for with the forfeit of my lifetime becomes a waiting room to hear the diagnosis of myself. All around are those who try to deceive me into falling deeper but their attempts are to no avail for knowledge has given me a branch to grab on to. A branch of realization of who I am and they are. It tells me that the choice has always been mine. It tells me to look forward instead of backwards and to look up instead of down. So hanging onto this sense of compassion from my own realization I ignore those falling around me and I look up to see where I have fallen from.

There is the light like one sun surrounded by darkness. Like looking up from the bottom of a well. There lies my fate but now comes the struggle. The struggle to climb out of this pit of ignorance by using a crunch of realization. I begin to ascend not sorry for what I will leave behind. Higher and higher I reach in humility. How could I not see what was always there? So beautiful is this source of forgiveness. This second chance to make things right. Tears of joy streaming down my face for I know that I can reach this awesome source of life. How grateful I am and how ashamed I was. Climbing closer to my goal my sorrow intercedes and down I look upon the lost. I cry for them all for the fate that awaits. Pain and suffering in the stomach of the beast for an eternity. I yell out to them to find purchase in knowledge for their own salvation. My cry falls upon laughter of wicked ways.

Here I wait. Crying out to the lost that the cost for falling is not worth the price we pay. There is no life in were they go. So with this piece I cry out to those that will hear and see. Don't look down in life but instead look up and fight to climb out and above those that drag you down. Save your life for it is yours to save. Heed all the words I speak for death comes any day and too late you may regain control over your self-righteous ways. God Bless.

No Mercy For Silent Screams

Words are of power from a despairing soul
Crying out of its broken form
Hope is the life that keeps it whole
Thinking salvation is but forlorn
A dying spark on the ground
Whispering its scream for a bit of truth
Not loud enough the silent sound
When the world becomes aloof
How much louder can ones soul scream
To be redeemed of nightmare dreams
Words have only emotion and thought
But the voice is much unseen
The despairing soul pours upon deaf ears
Or a man overwhelmed by his own fears
He'll scream along with crowded cheers
But a despairing soul he sheds no tears
No mercy for those who fall
From any man on this hopeless earth

Jail The best thing to me Is when I get some mail

Jail

Jail
You cannot smoke
Or toke
Trust
It's no joke
Jail
The best thing to me
Is when I get some mail
Days I cry
Others I sigh
Missing my family
That cannot come nowhere near me
Loss of visits
No more of those precious 60 minutes
Jail
It's making me frail
Also when you turn around
There's always that next tale
Jail
Times I feel
I'm getting beat down with hail
No respect towards me
Some CO's they start to bore me
With them always coming towards me
With their non-sobriety!
Jail
Getting caught up in the system
To me was a blessing
It had fixed me
Hopefully that I can see
It sure did make the best of me
My thinking is clearer
Making me not want to get nearer
To that bad ass drug dealer
Need the change in my life
Old life will be far out of sight
Jail
Trust me
Trust me indeed
I have learned my lesson
And counted my blessings
The nightmares almost over
For now on I will stay sober
Jail
No more jail
This is not no tale
This shhh is fa' real!

DINA MARIA DE TILLIO

We're sure that everyone in Dina's situation would ask the same questions, so we aren't surprised by her wonderfully empathetic heart. As she writes way from the other side of the country in The Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, CT, we're overcome with sadness at the thought of what she must be experiencing being locked up with a child on the outside. Hopefully, some of you can feel her pain — we assume that you will...

Questions I Ask

To my sister Antonia
Is she thinking of me?
Does she sleep at night?
Is she still using her blankie?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What kind of new foods is she eating?
What new words is she learning?
Is she still going on the potty?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What new cartoons is she into?
Who does she play with?
Is she ok?
How are you punishing her?
I hope it's the time out way
And not the spanking way.
Why haven't you let her write to me?
You know what I mean,
By drawing pictures for her mommy!
Antonia, I don't think you realize how hard it is
For me being a mommy
Not being able to see
The one and only thing
That matters to me
Which is my beautiful baby!

The Past

No more words of hurt
No more words of hatred
Words of peace
And intelligence
That shall be sacred
I want to be on my high
And so I shall not lie
No more of my bottoms
That will cause me more problems
The past is in the past
Time to move on
Which I will do very fast
I have made many faults
I do apologize to the ones I've hurt
I do promise there will be "no more" bursts
The future has come. And take me away
To be clean and free
And to take all the good advice.

INSANE ONE

Writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA, we bring you this next first time writer who's probably out when this finally gets published, but we want to thank him anyway. He quickly recognizes the power of The Beat and being that he's not only experienced what he's experienced, but he also has four children, we feel his opinion of our publication is more than credible. It's well respected and holds more weight than most opinions. We hope he got out, but if not, we will always consider publishing his work, so please don't hesitate to write.

The Beat

Q-vo, this is the Insane One from Merced California. I just thought I'd write these few words to let you know that I think what you guys are doing over there is beautiful. I am currently incarcerated at DVI in Tracy, "Deuel Vocational Institute." I am 34 years of age and a first term, however this letter is not about me. I just wanted to express myself on a few things about your paper.

It's great that these youngsters have a way to express themselves in many positive ways. It doesn't matter if it's over a poem, short letter, or even some art. What is important is that they can get their point across. I have four children of my own and let me tell you, they sure grow up very fast. I haven't been around my kids all that much because of certain circumstances but I have never failed to let them know how much I truly love them. I'll be getting out of here in 2007 and I am looking forward to spending much time with my kids.

I really do hope that this paper of yours continues for a long time because these kids don't only have a way to express themselves but they also get very positive feedback on their art as well. Keep up the good work and let me just say thanks to everyone at The Beat Within including you many young artists. Keep your heads up and don't let anyone get you down.

In a mirror I see a young face
Full of sad wrinkles and tears of disgrace
If I only knew then what I know now
I could have chosen a different way somehow
But what's done is done the wounds are healed
The scars I bear keep me in fear
For I now know the dark deeds I can do
But only if I give in to evil I lose.

read the rest of Jeremy Towner's BWO piece on page 58

